

Selected.

SALVATION.

The preaching of the Gospel is a proclamation of *salvation*. From the first the announcement to men has been—how they might be saved.

What is this salvation a salvation *from*? When a man asks to be saved, what is he to be saved *from*? From *what* is a man's soul to be delivered by his Saviour?

We fear the common answer is, *from punishment*. We even fear that the pulpit, very often, conveys that answer, unconsciously to itself, to the ordinary hearer.

Salvation means to most, we think, *salvation from penalty*. When they are saved, they are saved from pain. Christ came to deliver, in the common mind, from the punishment due to sin. And since the many consider salvation to be only a deliverance from punishment—and since this world (they are taught) is not a world of retribution, but a world of probation—and since only in the other world real penalty and real reward come—it therefore results that salvation, being a deliverance from punishment, is a thing which belongs solely to another existence. It comes after a man has died. It consists in his not going to hell.

With this as the view of salvation, it is impossible not to be confused on the very first principles of Christianity. Faith, repentance, duty, hope,—all are referred to another life. Religion is valuable, as providing for one's well-being *there*. The Gospel is postponed, as to all its highest benefits and blessings, to another existence. Salvation is future, and not present. The warnings and exhortations of Revelation are misinterpreted by this false first idea. A man mistakes his real danger, and runs into it while seeking to avoid an imaginary danger.

Salvation is deliverance from punishment, but as a secondary result. First of all, it is deliverance from sin. Salvation from penalty follows as a result of being saved from transgressions. The Saviour has this name, because He comes to "save His people from their sins." The Gospel is a proclamation of deliverance from a present curse. It has reference to this life and this world. It is the preaching of some blessing which is to be possessed *here and now*. And that is salvation and deliverance, in body, soul, and spirit, from iniquity, from transgression, from rebellion against God.

It is not punishment that ruins a man, but the sin that entails the punishment. It is not pain that destroys, but the transgression which brings the pain. It is not misery from which a man need cry to be delivered, but from the rebellion against God which has brought that misery.

Salvation, then, is salvation from sin—deliverance out of it—victory over it—mastery and conquest of the enemy inside a man, which is saving his life out.

It belongs to this life and this world. It is to be prayed for, sought for, worked for, and fought for, *here*. In this world, a man may be saved, nay, *must* be, if he is ever to be saved anywhere. He is in a state of salvation, a saved and delivered state, in this visible world: or he has no assurance of such a state in any world.

First of all, we need to be clear on this. Error here will produce error in all our thoughts of practical religion.

Where the main aim and end of Christianity is taken to be simply deliverance from penalty—where it is valued solely as offering the means of escape from penal suffering—we have postponed repentance, deferred amendment, blundering death-bed preparations. And then we have, again, that wonderful and sickening sight of men—who see no value in the life and the death of the Lord to men, except to assure them against the consequences of their sins—turning round and declaring there are no such

consequences—and, as there is no damnation, there is consequently no salvation.

The shallowness of Universalism has had its success solely because men have supposed salvation to be deliverance from punishment, and from a particular kind of punishment too,—punishment after death. It has been received because the popular pulpit has preached a salvation which is not that of the Gospel,—a salvation in sin, and a salvation *from* punishment. The matter is just reversed. God proclaims salvation in terms precisely contradictory. His salvation is *from* sin, while, as in David's case, it may be *in* punishment. A man may be—nay, often is—saved *in* punishment, and even *by* punishment. He can never be saved in sin, much less can he be saved *by* sin.

We press this. It is the shallowness of modern preaching,—this gospel of escape from pain. It is the shallowness and deadness of modern religion,—this selfish gospel of deliverance from suffering. It has divorced religion from every day duty, and from common life. It has turned her out of the counting house and the market and the shop. It has made her a mere insurance against some vague future suffering. It has represented her to men as a plan of escape from future flame. It has allowed them to go all their lives, lost and ruined, living in a present damnation, and yet hoping for a salvation that is to come.

Pain! Surely, in the light of Christianity, no man can hold pain accursed. The "Man of Sorrows" led a life of pain. His religion is the very sanctification of pain. Its very centre, as a practical thing, is the blessedness of pain—that sorrow and agony borne, that others may not bear them; that misery and anguish drunk to the dregs, that others may be spared them—is the road, forevermore, to peace and blessedness.

With Gethsemane and Calvary before a man, it is hard to see how a Christian can imagine that the whole purpose of his life is to shun suffering; and that the eternal purpose and value of his faith are, that by it he escapes pain.

We must go back to the first principles here, more clearly than we have yet done. The old Gospel of salvation *from sin* must be preached with more care and more pronounced distinctness, because of this terrible confusion of the popular pulpit.

To deliver men from the slavery of sin—to deliver them by pain, and through pain—came hither the Holy One. To make possible and to proclaim the salvation of a man from the rot that rots his heart out, from the bitter ruin that overwhelms his soul, from the sin that poisons him by inches, body, soul, and spirit,—to do this our Lord came. He knew the enemy. He knew the curse. He did not mistake causes for effects. He came to "save His people from their sins." That salvation was through untold agony to Him: and must be, to the end, through bitter anguish to them. He proclaimed no reversal of the moral laws of the universe. He did not make it possible that a man be lost in sin, and yet saved from the penalty of sin. He divorced not ruin from ruin's causes. They are forever bound together by the laws of God's unchangeable nature.

We therefore preach *salvation from sin*. We tell men that the Lord came hither, and took our nature, and lived and died and rose to make it possible for a man to be delivered from this curse and ruin which is bound up in his nature.

That curse and ruin every man knows is there. Its existence is no part of the *peculiar* revelation of Christianity. Persius, the heathen poet, recognized its existence as readily as St. Paul. Christianity only finds it there; takes it as it is, teaches its nature, and makes salvation from it possible.

The man that accepts this salvation enters on a course of warfare with this curse. He undertakes a life-long struggle with it. He knows it will ruin

him utterly, to the last fibre of his nature, if he do not get rid of it.

Therefore he accepts the preached salvation, and in Christ's name and way stands up like a man and faces his enemy. He is sure to meet trouble, sure to encounter pain, sure to suffer anguish. A suffering Christ has sanctified all these to salvation's uses. But in these—neck-deep in these—he is a *saved man*. Already no is delivered from the power of sin; and, every day, he is becoming more and more delivered, through the faith and by the power of the Lord.

At the start, then, when a man accepts the offers of salvation, and desires to embrace them and be saved, let him be distinctly taught that it is a present world's work and business on which he is entering. It involves deliverance from hell, necessarily, of course, but because it takes for granted deliverance from sin.

It is something, also, which he has to win himself by downright work. It is God's free gift in Christ; that is true; but like all God's free gifts—the sunlight and the summer rain and the fruitful field—can only be made an individual blessing, a personal possession, by a man's own effort. Therefore, salvation for any single soul is to be wrought out by that soul's own toil and tears. On the anvil of holy resolution a man beats out into shape the work of his life; and the sweat rains on the hot iron, and the breath comes sobbing, and the muscles strain, and he longs for the evening hour of rest; but he, and he only, can do this which the Great Master has given, this special work,—the working out of his own salvation with trembling and fear.

The proclamation of salvation, the good news of God, this is it,—that a man *now* by Christ's Birth and Life and Passion, by his Resurrection, Ascension, and gift of His Holy Spirit in His own Church and Kingdom, can be saved from the slavery of sin, and can work out his own deliverance more fully every hour he lives.

And first, to understand the rest,—Salvation means work—hard work, and present work—work in *this* world. It belongs to us here. A man's evidence that he will be saved when he is dead is that he is now saved while he is alive.

WEEKLY COMMUNION.

DEAR SIR,—This question has agitated the church for many years; and I think it is a question of more importance than many suppose.

There is a principle involved in it. Is apostolic practice our guide, and a binding rule, or is it not? If not in this, how can apostolic practice bind us in other things? For example, what have we for the weekly observance of the Lord's Day, if apostolic practice is no authority for weekly communion?

May we not observe the Lord's Day only monthly or quarterly as well as the Lord's Supper? Where are our omissions to stop? If Paul were asked whether he approved of monthly or quarterly communion, he would be likely to reply, as on another occasion, "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God." In his view the absence of apostolic practice or the example of the churches as established by the apostles ought to settle all such questions.

I do not stop to prove the apostolic practice. I think it is conceded, by all who have examined this question, that weekly communion was the invariable practice in the apostolic churches, and for many years after the death of the apostles. This being conceded, we ask, what authority is there for abandoning apostolic example in this case? If we abandon it here, have we any just right to complain of those who depart from it in other things? If apostolic practice is not binding on the churches in every age, then are the churches left without inspired rule or precedent in things ecclesiastic. We might have inspired doctrine; but, in church