

SALVATION
AND
ETERNAL LIFE.

—*Titus.*

By J. BOYD.

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—*Titus.*



SALVATION and Eternal Life are the great subjects before the mind of the Apostle in this short epistle. In it God is brought before us as *Saviour*, as is also the Lord Jesus Christ. Three times over we have "God our Saviour," followed immediately by "Jesus Christ our Saviour." This is very striking in such a brief letter. God is our Saviour as to counsel, grace, might, mercy, kindness, and love. He is the Source and Author of our salvation, and this is effected mediatorially through Christ, so that Jesus is our Saviour instrumentally. And what a joy it is to our hearts to view in this character the God against whom we have been so rebellious !

We have also Eternal Life mentioned three times. In chapter i. we have, "In hope of eternal life ;" and in chapter ii., "Looking for that blessed hope ;" and in chapter iii., "The hope of eternal life." Therefore I feel justified in saying that these two blessings form the subject of the epistle ; and that they have a very close relationship with one another is not difficult to discover. Let us, with the help of God, and in dependence upon Him, seek to get His mind as to both.

In the first place I would remark that the reader must be careful to note that Eternal Life is not presented in the writings of Paul in the same way in which it is in those of John. Paul has his own way, or better, the way given him by God, of presenting this subject, as has also John. If God takes up two or more servants to set forth the truth with regard to any blessing He has for man, it is because there are two or more ways in which that blessing can be contemplated, each complete in itself. With Paul, Eternal Life

is almost invariably a *hope* ; with John, a *present possession*. As far as I am aware, when Paul uses the term, it has always, in the way in which he uses it, a future bearing ; never when John uses it, except perhaps in two instances, and this may be questioned even as to them. I refer to John iv., 36 and xii., 25. In the gospel of John we have it in connection with the quickening power of the Father and the Son, with the knowledge of these persons, and with the relationships into which we are brought in association with the Son. In the epistle, we have it in the light of God fully declared in Christ, in fellowship with the Father and the Son, as born of God, and as having the affections of children. Hence in the writings of John, Eternal Life is always viewed as the present possession of all who believe, be they "Babes," "Young men," or "Fathers." All are contemplated as *forgiven* and having *Eternal Life*. All have not arrived at the same state of maturity, but the Babes know the Father, and in this lies Eternal Life. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." (Jno. xvii., 3).

A child born into a family must be a considerable time in the bosom of that family before he knows his father and his brothers, but this is not so in the family of God. No one but those who know the Father can be considered children of God. But the ability to *recognise* the *brethren* is another matter. In his first epistle John points out the true characteristics of the children of God, in order that we may make no mistake. But the eldest son in a family has no other life than the youngest, though it may be more developed, and the mind of the father, as well as the true character of the relationships, may be better known ; but the life in the babe is the same, and is capable of the same developments.

It is true that through false teaching many true believers are in doubt as to the possession of the blessings of Christianity, but it is well for us to know that the possession of the blessings of the Gospel does not depend upon our knowledge that we do possess them, nor upon our ability to give an account of them. That the thing must be ours, and that we must have it, before we can know we have it, goes without saying. Our

knowledge of the fact is a question of intelligence in the mind of God. John writes to those who believed in the name of the Son of God, in order that they might *know* that they had Eternal Life; not that they might have it—the Gospel was preached to them for that—but that they might know that the gift was really theirs. They evidently did not fully know the rich blessing that was theirs as believers in the Son of God; but John knew it, and his great desire was that they should know it also. That it was theirs before he took up his pen to write the epistle, as truly as after they had read it, cannot rightly be called in question; but how free in the light of God the word would set their souls, and how great their rejoicing would be as they contemplated the magnitude of the love that had been lavished upon them—the love of God in sending His Son to be the propitiation for their sins, and the love of the Father in calling them into the place of children—none know but those who have experienced it.

The epistle (I. John) was not written that believers might have Eternal Life, for this they already had by faith in the name of the Son of God, neither was it written that they might doubt that the blessing was theirs, but it was written that their minds might be relieved from all anxiety on the subject, and that they might be able to go on undistractedly, building up their souls in the love of God. In his Gospel, in the most forcible language possible, it is affirmed over and over again that the believer has Eternal Life. It is written, as John says, “That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name,” and the epistle is written to believers who have the life, to confirm them in the truth and blessedness of it.

But I may be told by some, that I might err by pressing the truth too much upon objective lines. But at present there is no danger of that, for I am engaged in pressing the truth very much upon subjective lines. When I turn to Paul’s way of putting it, I hope, through the grace of God, to keep the admonition in mind. The way in which John’s epistle speaks of it is almost always in a subjective way. As in *hope* it is always objective; but as ours by the quickening power of the Father or the Son, or as born of God, it is always

subjective. We are alive in the life of the Son of God, and this cannot be objective. How could I have passed out of death into life objectively? I could not pass out of death into life in any sense¹ apart from quickening. It would always be better for beloved brethren to wait until they know the meaning of words before they attempt to use them. These words are not found in Scripture, and Christianity can be taught without using them. Personally I have no objection to their use, when they are used in a right way, but to say the least of it, this is not always done. It would be at all times better for us to enquire if certain teaching is according to Scripture, rather than to trouble our souls with questions as to whether it is on objective or subjective lines. I fear there is none of us to-day guiltless of being a little one-sided in our ministry, but this would not be so very dangerous were the other side not denied. The great question with me is, not whether a certain line of ministry hangs too much to one side, but is it true as it stands? If it be true, though leaning too much in one direction, I would seek to be used of God to supply what is lacking. If it is untrue, it must be rejected utterly.

As I have said, John speaks of Eternal Life as in the Son, and subsisting for us in the knowledge of the Father and Jesus Christ His sent One, and in relationship with the Father and the Son according to the power of the Divine nature which we have as begotten of God. He speaks of it as a present thing, which all believers possess, whether they *know* they possess it or not; and he declares that those who have it not are in moral darkness and death. That which distinguishes those who possess it from the men of the world, is the practice of righteousness, and love to the brethren.

But Paul usually speaks of it as a hope. He does not speak of having it as a present possession; neither does he speak of it in connection with this world, nor, as far as I am aware, with the world to come. In certain other Scriptures we do get it in relation to the world to come, as in Mark x., 30, but I do not see it in this connection in the writings of Paul. Romans ii., 7, clearly refers to the eternal state, for it is consequent upon the judgment of the secrets of men. It is not

with Paul dispensational, but eternal, and connected with our glorified state. It was promised before the ages of time, and therefore, in this sense, the course of time has nothing to do with it. It was the purpose of God for the objects of His choice, and by promise it was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. The *kingdom* was prepared, for those who shall inherit it, *from* the foundation of the world, but Eternal Life was in promise in and for *eternity*. It was given us in Christ Jesus *before* the world began, and when dispensations, the world, and kingdoms, have all passed away, it will abide.

The reader will notice that I have spoken of Eternal Life in three ways; first, as moral; that is to say, subsisting in divine and Eternal relationships, and in the love which belongs to these relationships, and by which they are enjoyed. It is in the Son of God, and by the quickening power of God it has become the life of our souls. This is the way in which we have it as set forth in John's first epistle. Second, as dispensational, and the portion of believers in the world to come, in the day when the devil will be imprisoned in the abyss, and death annulled, and the government of the world in the hand of Christ. We have it presented in this way in the first three gospels. Third, as the eternal purpose of God, with which dispensations have nothing to do, except that in the Gospel this purpose of God has been brought to light, but it belongs to eternity, and it is our hope, which will be fulfilled for us at the rapture of the Church, when we shall be glorified. Paul generally speaks of it in this way.

It occurs to me, that if we take account of the Gift according to the different ways in which it is presented by the various writers who have been used of God to put on record His mind concerning it, we shall escape much of the confusion many have dropped into. How often one has heard the remark, made in answer to the claim of present possession that Paul was in hope of it, and that he speaks of the *end* being everlasting life, whereas the claim to present possession places it at the *beginning*, forgetting altogether that there are various ways in which this heavenly gift may be contemplated.

That in the present dispensation it belongs to an out-of-the-world condition of relationship and blessing, is not hard to see ; and that the relationship and blessing is of a heavenly order, could not be made plainer in Scripture than it is made. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has His abiding-place in the heavens, and the Son has gone back to Him as Man, and there is the true home of Eternal Life. We have it in fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. But we have not gone there yet, though our souls have been quickened in the power of that life, and the God and Father to whom the Son has ascended is our God and Father. We have that life while we are in this world, but when we are glorified we shall enjoy it in its own native place and climate, the Father's house.

I may be asked, What is the good of possessing the Gift if I do not *know* that I possess it ? Of what value is a gift to a man who can give no account of it ? I will answer by asking another question : What is the good of possessing heart and lungs, if a man cannot tell he has them ? Most people have very little knowledge of these organs, and though they feel the heart beat within the breast, they know nothing about it except what has been told them. An infant has all the good of them while it is yet almost unconscious of its own existence. There is not a believer upon earth whose heart has not been illuminated by the love of God. Is that nothing ? There is not a believer upon earth who does not know the Father. Is there no good in that ? There is not a believer upon earth who does not love the brethren. Is that a matter of no importance ? He may not understand these things to be the springs and pulses of Eternal Life ; he may not even have anything but a vague conception of the meaning of the term, but, if he be a true believer, the Gift is his as surely as though he were able to write a treatise on the subject. He has it from the Son of God, derives it from Him, enjoys it in communion with the Father and the Son, and in the love of the children of God. What he enjoys he may not be able to put a name upon, but John puts a name upon it for him, and lets him know that " This is the promise that He hath promised us, even Eternal Life." The promise is realised in abiding in the Son and in the Father. He will have it at the rapture of the Church.

in a glorified state, and then and thus it will be enjoyed without the hindrances incident to our wilderness career ; but this is Paul's way of speaking of it. In this sense Paul exhorts Timothy to lay hold upon it, and tells him that to this he had been called. (1 Tim., vi., 12). In the way in which it is presented in I. John, one could hardly be exhorted to *lay hold* of it. The believer has it already.

In Titus it is the goal before the heart and mind of the believer. And it was "God who cannot lie" promised it before the world began. Had any creature been able to penetrate the secret of God, how astonished would he have been, and how ready to think that God had altered His plans regarding man, when Adam was placed in innocence in an earthly paradise ; and what confirmation that thought would have received when man by transgression fell headlong under the power of the devil, and under the judgment of death, and above all, when the heirs of promise were found hopelessly lost, and prone in the mire of spiritual and carnal degradation ! But these are but the thoughts of the creature, and He who is infinite in wisdom pursues His own course in the fulfilment of His rich designs, unaffected alike by the feverish impatience of unbelief, as by its presumptuous criticisms. The crystal waves of God's eternal purpose break out from the region of unapproachable light and roll foamlessly and noiselessly upon the mighty bosom of infinite and unfathomable love, and in their strength invincible bear to the very heart of the Father every heir of promise. Winds adverse to the will of God, and set in motion by the enemy, may rage against the fiat of the Eternal, seek to beat back into obscurity the march of His beneficent decrees, and endeavour to place beyond recovery the objects of His eternal choice, but the implacable cunning, and apparently successful foe, must find at the finish that he has but played into the hands of Everlasting Love, and to his endless confusion has, all unwittingly and unwillingly, helped on the fulfilment of Divine Counsel.

What God has purposed He will bring to pass ; He is able to do it, and *He cannot lie*. What strong encouragement this gives us who have put our whole trust in His word. It is almost impossible for man, who is naturally false, to take

in the idea of absolute truthfulness. Neither Balaam nor Balak could believe that God would not be induced to change His mind, and therefore did they shift their altars about from place to place, but they had to learn that God was not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" is the charge God brings against the wicked. Man is by nature false. He bears the moral features of the fell destroyer of the human race, who, "When he speaketh a lie, speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." The Cretians were strongly marked by this devilish characteristic; they were "*always liars.*" They had been nurtured in an atmosphere of falsehood, and with truth they had never met until the Gospel came to them. And now they needed to be aroused to the great fact that they had to do with One who could not lie. It was a change for men who had hitherto to do with liars only, now to have to do with One to whom lying was an impossibility. And God had promised Eternal Life, and they were heirs of the promise.

But these Cretians, like all the rest of Adam's race, lay under the bondage of the devil, the judgment of God, and the fear of death. Before they could advance one step in the direction of the purpose of God they must be set free from bondage. They could not deliver themselves. Even had they, through a work of grace in their souls, desired deliverance, they were absolutely unable to accomplish anything. They were in darkness and error, in the clutches of the devil, his willing slaves, and children of wrath. How are they to be set free, so that they may be able to move forward in the direction of the promised land? Only one way. God intervenes for them in the person of His Son. He takes up the attitude of Saviour. His grace brings salvation. That which He did for Israel in a temporal way He does in a spiritual way for those lying, lazy, voluptuous Cretians. He sent Moses to deliver Israel; He sent His Son to deliver us. He gave Himself for us. Our sins are gone in His death for us; His precious blood is a perfect shelter from the judgment which they merited. Not only that, but His resurrection is the witness that our sins are as completely gone as if they had never been committed. Chapter ii. sets before us the prin-

ciple upon which that salvation reached us. It was the grace of God. That same grace also teaches us how we are to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. It brings us out in the refusal of ungodliness and worldly lusts; and as characterised by sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, to look for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ. How certain individuals, ourselves for instance, have come under that grace and its teaching, we are not told in chapter ii., but we are in chapter iii. In chapter iii. we get the means used to our salvation. First of all our moral condition is described: "Foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Upon this moral chaos, where wallowed the heirs of promise in the slime of an apostate world's corruption, the eye of God rested. Darkness was upon the face of the deep. But God works by light. The first thing we get is the revelation of His kindness and love to man. This came to light in the gift of His Son, and in His death for our sins. "In that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The might of death is broken; His resurrection is the witness to this; and Satan has lost his hold upon us, for we view death no longer as the witness of the displeasure of God on account of our sins, but as the witness of His love to us, for He sent His Son to bear the judgment. Now the darkness is past, the tempests of wrath and judgment are hushed for ever, Christ is risen and glorified, and the love of God shines down upon us from a cloudless sky.

And He has saved us. He has washed us and made us whiter than snow. He has cleansed us in the fountains of our life. We are born of water and of the Spirit. A new, pure nature has been imparted to us, and the death of Christ has been applied to the old. It is no longer ourselves. It is in us, and will be in us as long as we are in mortal bodies, but it is "*not I.*" It has been condemned in the cross, and I have a new nature by the power of the living and abiding word of God. I have also come under the Lordship of Christ, and in this way have anticipated the "regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory." In that day saints upon earth will come into a new *earthly* order of things,

but while upon earth, I, by the washing of regeneration, have been brought into a new *heavenly* order, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost gives me capacity and power to enjoy all that I have been brought into.

Thus He has saved us. He *has* saved us. In some other Scriptures salvation is viewed as in hope, as Eternal Life is viewed in this epistle, but here it is present, and must be present, because we are to move onward to the goal before us, Eternal Life—"That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of Eternal Life;" and we cannot advance one step in the direction of the purpose of God until the chains of our slavery have been broken by His power.

According to His mercy He saved us. Our sins are gone in His death. His blood has washed them all away, and we are justified, cleared from every charge that was against us. The power of the oppressor has been broken, death annulled, and Eternal Life is in view. He "hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality (incorruptibility) to light through the gospel." Death has lost its terror for us. No believer is afraid of it as the judgment of God. He may have, and ought to have, a physical shrinking from it, but as the judgment of God upon us on account of our sins, it no longer exists. The devil, as the one who has the might of death, we shall never see again. We may have to meet him as the roaring lion (Amalek), and as the power of wickedness in the heavenlies (the seven nations in the land of promise), but as Pharaoh, the oppressor of the people of God—never again. Well may each of us sing in the joy of full deliverance—

" Rise, my soul, thy God directs thee,
Stranger hands no more impede;
Pass thou on, His hand protects thee,
Strength that has the captive freed."

The purpose of God, Eternal Life, is in view ; and, being justified by His grace we are heirs according to that hope.

Another remark I would make : We are to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. This is accomplished by the careful maintenance of good works. The way to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour is to come out down here as saved people. We should let it be seen that we are bondslaves to none but the living God. He has redeemed us out of the hand of the enemy, and we belong to Him. In the darkness in which we were by nature, we were compelled to serve sin and Satan, and the bondage under which we were was very cruel, but from that we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Are we now to go back and freely submit ourselves once more to the taskmaster ? Surely not. Other lords have had rule over us, but from henceforth we belong to Christ alone. The authorities of darkness have no longer any claim to our services ; we have been translated into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love, and our happy service is in doing the will of God. Ungodliness and worldly lusts are to be denied, and sobriety, righteousness, and godliness are to characterise us, while we look for that blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

I would just add that while Paul presents Eternal Life as in hope, the manifestation of the word of God, through the proclamation which was committed to him, brings it in in the way in which John is used to present it, for the word is the word of life, and by it we are enlightened, born again, and possess the new nature. But Paul does not pursue this subject.

May we better know the gift that is ours in the grace of God, and also the blessedness of the hope set before us, so that, on the one hand, we may enjoy fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ ; and on the other, lay hold of Eternal Life.