



Bible Student's Notebook™

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Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XIX
Issue 458

The Salvation of the Unbeliever

Part 1 of 2

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

As God is the Savior of all mankind, especially of those who believe (I Timothy 4:10), we may confidently rest on one grand and glorious foundation truth: *that all salvation is of God, and neither believer nor unbeliever has any part in it.* On the one hand, this assures us of the possibility of saving all men, for God alone is able; on the other, it bars out all human schemes for their restoration, whether by works or suffering, by giving them a second chance, or by any cause whatever which originates in man.

Those who believe are saved by His grace (Romans 4:16), those who do not believe are saved through His judgments, but in both it is He alone Who is Savior.

Faith is but the channel of grace; it plays no efficient part in salvation. Judgment is but the means He uses, the process which leads to the salvation of the unbeliever. It does not remove his guilt or cleanse a single sin. That is done wholly and solely by the blood of Christ. Every effort to bring about the ultimate salvation of all through the purgatorial or penitential sufferings of the sinner is a denial of this great truth.

Judgments do not save; but the God Who judges is also the Savior, and all of His dealings with mankind are governed by the grand goal which He has set before Him: to become All in *all* of His creatures.



THE UNBELIEVER IS SAVED BY TANGIBLE EVIDENCE

In setting forth the process by means of which God brings the unbeliever back to Himself, we must remember that few believers are able to analyze the method used in their own salvation. Now, if we are not able to explain our own experience, how shall we understand His method with others? Yet, strange as it may seem, God's dealings with the unbeliever are much more easily apprehended than His way with us. The very simplicity of faith baffles us. Most theological systems seek to base belief on evidence, and speak of "Christian evidences" as the foundation of the believer's salvation. This is, rather, the method He uses in the deliverance of the unbeliever.

When we reflect how few of those who actually heard our Lord and His apostles, who saw Him and perceived the signs and miracles and powers which He performed, and had ample opportunity to test their genuineness, how few of those actually believed, we are tempted to lose confidence in the efficacy of "Christian evidences." Yet they had their place and were used in the proclamation of the kingdom. They produced a hybrid sort of faith, generated partly by tangible evidence, and partly by confidence in those who wrought them. The case of Thomas is an example of the overpowering force of evidence where faith is wanting. No man can long withstand the testimony of his senses, even when his interests are opposed. Yet today the doubting Thomases are offered

(see UNBELIEVER, page 4067) ↗

Bible Student's Notebook™

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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UNBELIEVER (continued from front page)

no proof to correct their credulous questions. It is either sheer unfounded faith or fatal unbelief.

The tangible proofs given to support the proclamation of the kingdom afford a rich field for the study of the effect of evidence on the human heart. The unbeliever will be saved by sight. He will yield to the force of facts. He will be convinced by logic. What evidence is most suited for this purpose? In our Lord's ministry we can see both the helps and the hindrances offered by the senses. The consideration of a few cases will reveal what most moves men and what makes them obstinate.

The rich young man was hindered by his possessions. The Samaritans were helped by the Lord's words. The resurrection of Lazarus led many Jews to rely on His acts. These illustrate God's method in the judgment of the unbeliever. He removes hindrances – no earthly acquisitions interfere with the decisions of the heart, for both heaven and earth flee from the face of Him Who sits on the throne. He works the greatest possible miracle by raising them from the dead. He reads the inmost secret of their hearts. He appears in their very presence in soul-dismaying splendor. They cannot doubt His power or His perfections, and no motive remains to lead them to deceive themselves.

The judgment of unbelievers takes place in the interval between the passing of this present earth and the creation of the new. Every tie which bound them to the earth has been burned up. They are the subjects of the most astounding miracle ever wrought, having been raised from the dead. They are in the presence of the Divine Majesty. Their secrets are bared to His awful gaze. The character of their judgment, being adjusted to their acts, not simply as to severity but so as to correct them, will reveal God's purpose to save and reconcile them to Himself. This, followed by their death in the lake of fire and subsequent vivification at the consummation, is the basis of their reconciliation.

First, we will consider the hindrances which have held many from becoming followers of Christ. The rich young ruler (Matthew 19: 16; Luke 18:18) desired eonian life, but was kept from it by his acquisitions. Will this hinder him in the judgment? No:

for then all of his riches will have vanished, not only through his own death, but by the fires which have engulfed the world.

Examples abound. The excuses offered by those who were bidden to the great supper (Luke 14:18) are all removed before the great white throne. No fields or oxen or wives will intrude between the spirit and the great Judge.

RESURRECTION AND VIVIFICATION WILL SAVE THE UNBELIEVER

In the judgment day God will judge the hidden things of humanity (Romans 2:16). We are prone to consider this a mere exhibition of His omniscience to facilitate the trial of the sinner and to insure his condemnation; but more than this, it cannot but have a most powerful effect on the unbeliever's attitude toward Christ. What was it that impressed the woman of Samaria? It was His knowledge of her hidden secrets. When she left her water and went into the city she bore witness:

Come hither! Lo there is a Man Who told me all that I do. Is not this the Christ? (John 4:29).

As a result, we read that many of the Samaritans of that city believe in Him because of the woman's word that He told her all that she did (John 4:39).

Yet more believe on Him through His own word. The Lord bared only a few facts in the woman's life. In the judgment, all of men's secrets will be exposed. If men could be moved to believe through the word of a dissolute woman, how much more readily will they bow when all of their own secrets are brought to view! Not only so, but when the lives of all of their fellow creatures are subjected to the same superhuman scrutiny, the overwhelming evidence will banish all doubt of the identity of the One before Whom they stand.

The blessed results achieved by His exposure of the woman at Sychar's spring will be multiplied by many millions at the great white throne. There is nothing hidden that shall not be manifested (Matthew 10:26). As in Corinth, the hidden things of the unbeliever's heart become apparent, and falling on his face, he will worship God (I Corinthians 14:25). ▶



Perhaps no miracle wrought by our Lord and His apostles created a stronger conviction than that of raising the dead. When Lazarus was raised, many of the rulers believed, and the chief priests were concerned lest all should believe on Him because of this sign (John 11:45, 48). When Peter raised Dorcas, it also was used to convince many who believed on the Lord. Can we imagine what conviction it must have brought to Lazarus and to Dorcas themselves, if they should have had the slightest tendency to doubt? Could there have been any stronger proof of divine power than that their very life had come back to them at the bidding of One Who is stronger than death? In the process of winning the unbeliever, we judge their resurrection and final vivification to be ample to account for their salvation and reconciliation.

The salvation of the unbeliever will be by sight, not by faith. Otherwise, it is effected in the same way as that of the believer: by the word and power and presence of God. The means which proved most effective in the past are repeated, but accompanied with unparalleled power and under circumstances infinitely more impressive.

The apostle Paul's case is of surpassing significance in its bearing on the salvation of unbelievers. He was the foremost of sinners, and it cannot be denied that, among men, there was no case quite as desperate as his. All question as to God's ability to save vanishes in the light of his call on the Damascus road. The miraculous means employed in his case surely would suffice for every one of God's enemies. Who will deny, on sober reflection, that the appalling

power and glory of the august judgment session into which the unbeliever is ushered by his resurrection will be unutterably more impressive?

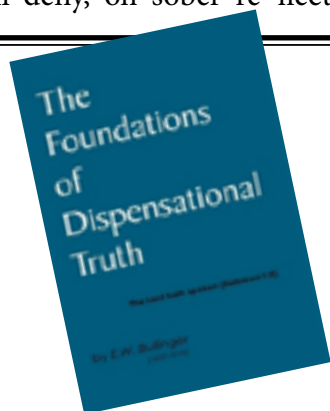
The apostle's vision passed. He came back to a scene where all was as before. He alone had changed. Yet the unbeliever sees the power and presence of God not only in his own deliverance from death, but in all around him. The vision does not vanish. The divine presence abides.

One of the leading lights on eternal torment crystallizes the prevailing insensibility to the mighty dealings of God with the unbeliever in the following question and answer. "Is there going to be any tremendous power in the moral sense in eternity to change a character that it could not change here?" "There is no hint in the Bible of a change of character beyond this world."

These very leaders would shudder if we should suggest that salvation is based on character. Yet they do not hesitate to damn mankind for lack of it! – but we will let that pass. Unbelief in the saint is just as irrational as in the infidel.

DESTRUCTION IS THE PRECURSOR OF GOD'S SALVATION

The appalling nature of the blindness which lies on Christendom with reference to God's great ultimate can hardly find a better illustration than in the question and answer we have quoted. So far as they read their Bible, the unbeliever is *not* raised from the dead at the judgment, nor vivified at the consummation.



247 pp., PB

See order form.

The Foundations of Dispensational Truth

by – E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

Originally published in 1913, this was Bullinger's last book. It serves to help cut the tether of tradition with which Christians have been bound for so long. It does so by showing the absolute necessity of observing the great duty of "*rightly dividing the Word of Truth*" (II Timothy 2:15).

This definitive work recognizes the clear distinctions between the Body of Christ and Israel. Controversial in the eyes of traditional Christianity, this extraordinary work will prove invaluable to the serious student of Scripture.

They contend for the genuineness of miracles, yet ignore the most tremendous and stupendous of all miracles – the resurrection of all mankind. They are making a firm stand for a whole Bible, yet practically expunge the great truth that,

All who are in the grave shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.

All of the significance and power of the resurrection of the unbeliever is totally ignored and denied by many who consider themselves defenders of the faith and supporters of the Bible.

We consider, and rightly too, that our resurrection and vivification will be an essential part of our salvation. It will be the crowning glory of our deliverance. Yet when the same mighty power of God acts on behalf of the unbeliever, resurrection becomes damnation and vivification death! These, we are told, will have no effect on the character of the unbeliever at all! Since that is so, it logically follows that character is not affected by resurrection or vivification and, as a result, the saints will have just the same character in glory which they have today. The transformation will be entirely physical, not moral or spiritual. Our

likeness to Christ will be limited to the brilliancy of our appearance. All of the heartbreaking defects in our characters will be with us still, only unutterably more apparent and painful in His presence.

But enough! It is not true! Every experience through which we pass affects our characters, even in the present life, and we may rest assured that our character (how I hate to use a non-scriptural term!) will accord with the presence of His glory.

Our resurrection and vivification are simultaneous, but the unbeliever will be raised long before he is vivified. The change which eventuates in the ultimate salvation of the unbeliever is wrought, not only by his resurrection, but by the august judgment session, when he stands in the presence of Christ, with all of his unbelief swept away by the awful realization of His power and the justice of His throne. We are asked, "Is it possible for them to repent?" Rather, we would like to know, "Is it possible for them *not* to repent, or change their minds?" We cannot conceive of an unrepentant sinner before the great white throne.

God's thoughts and man's imaginations are nowhere more at variance than on the subject of judgment, ►

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or punishment. God is love: man is hate. David was wise when he was given the choice of fleeing before his enemies or falling before the hand of Jehovah. He uttered a great truth when he exclaimed,

Let us fall now into the hand of Jehovah, for His mercies are many: and let me not fall into the hand of man! (II Samuel 24:14).

Surely his choice was vindicated, for, when the angel stretched out his hand on Jerusalem to destroy it, Jehovah repented Himself of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people,

It is enough! Stay now Thine hand (:16).

Jonah went through the streets of Nineveh, crying:

“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” ... But God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented concerning the evil that He said He would do unto them. And He did it not (Jonah 3:6, 10).

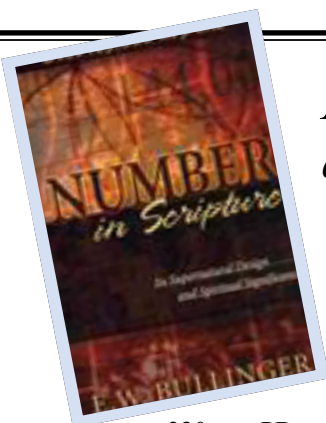
Then what did Jonah do? Was he not pleased at the success of his mission? Did he not glory in the character of His God? Alas! he was like the majority of the Lord’s people today. Like Jonah, they imagine that God has a streak of hate in His character and that He wanted to destroy Nineveh to give it exercise – but He had an object in threatening its destruction. Now that they repented and the object was attained, why should He belie His character and destroy them from sheer vindictiveness? Jonah thought He ought: and so think those today whose prototype he was.

GOD’S GLORY DEMANDS THE SALVATION OF ALL

Is it not too bad that Jonah’s God was a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenting of the evil which He had threatened (Jonah 4:2)? What did Jonah care for Nineveh? What pains had it cost him? What comfort did it bring to him? Yet God looked at it from His standpoint. In it there were sixty thousand souls more in tune with Him than sulky Jonah. He was their Creator, and He had not created them for naught.

The thought that the resurrection and judgment of the unbeliever is only a prelude to his final “destruction” in the lake of fire must be judged by its moral effect, for it has no support whatever in the Scriptures. In the first place, “destruction” (by which annihilation or extinction of being is intended) is never used of the lake of fire or of the second death. It is always used of the sinner before his resurrection at the great white throne. Those who are “destroyed” in Gehenna will be there. Those who “perished” in the wilderness and at the flood will be raised. “Destruction” is never annihilation. It never precludes resurrection and salvation. Indeed, it is a necessary precursor of salvation. The Lord came to seek and to save the “destroyed” (lost), so that, even if there were a single passage telling us that the unbeliever is “destroyed” in the second death (which there is not) we would still have every reason to believe God when He assures us that all who are dying in Adam shall be made alive in Christ. ■

(to be continued)



320 pp., PB,

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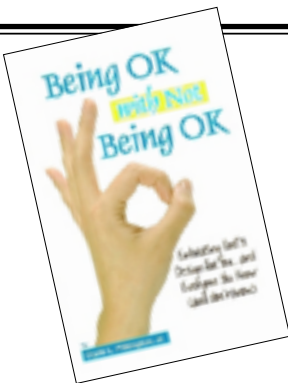


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134 pp., PB

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by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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Thus it is by design – by divine design. Father is bringing you to a place where you are OK with not being OK, where you simply rest in His current purpose and plan in your training and development for that grand and magnificent culmination that He has so wonderfully and skillfully designed especially for you – in your next life.

I have read it completely three times. I always refer back to certain chapters. – FL

When I read it, it was like I could breathe again. Your calming words lead me to a greater realization. – OH

*Thank you for this! It brought such peace and rest to me, and brought a greater understanding of God's great love for **all** His creation. That He alone is in control of everything is mind boggling to say the least! – NM*

So fantastic! Such peace!! – Australia