

GOODNEWS LETTER

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SALVATION: PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE

In this weeks **GoodNews Letter**, I want to restate and add a few things on '**tenses of salvation**' that we covered in last weeks, No. 230.

If we are to have harmony and discernment "**...which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing Spiritual things** (thoughts) **with spiritual** (words)," we have to study the **PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE** Tenses of salvation.

It makes '**discernment sense**' to have a past, present and future idea of our spiritual life; for, Scripture demands it and both are compatible when it comes to understanding. Everywhere, the Bible speaks of physical eyes and spiritual eyes (ears, etc.), allowing our understanding to go from the physical to the spiritual; from Law to grace, Old to New and from this life to the next.

First off, man is made in God's image; TRIUNE, a composition of a body, soul and spirit. **Secondly**, the Bible clearly teaches of a **past salvation** that has a present-day application; one that looks toward a risen Savior and walking within the spiritual realm of Christ. In the '**life-walk**,' we exercise faith in the same way as Abraham did. We look over worldly barriers to see the city to come.

And, concerning tenses, I find it extremely interesting that we may read, even in the **same chapter**, words of a **past reference** and words of a **present application**. While, we get a feeling that these verses have opposite meanings and are contradictory; it is only apparent.

One passage that speaks to the **past, present and future** standing of man is **Romans 8** - perhaps, the best example for explaining salvation in tenses.

Paul explains that a believer has a "**never-ending separation**", because he is forever kept secure in the love of God. Are we convinced about once saved, always saved, yet?

Paul, certainly was! "**For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come (and, there's more), nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,**" **Romans 8:38, 39.**

And, his letter to the Romans isn't the Calvinistic approach of, '*if you are saved, you'll be faithful; even, joining a Missionary Baptist Church before you die.*' Rather, Paul shows a difference between "**heirs**" and "**joint-heirs.**" He teaches that a life is based upon suffering. Christ suffered, of course and Paul calls upon us to do our own, if God's will (submitting to the rule of God).

The difference that Paul makes in Romans lies in our service. He has no thought of redoing what Christ accomplished at Calvary.

However, New Covenant service is where we do God's will at all costs, as grace is supplied. Father Abraham showed us that we are to leave family and areas, if God so decrees. But, even if we never leave home, a godly walk requires that we walk away from the world and enter the **narrow road** of service, going from physical to spiritual. The LORD rewards faithful service.

In verses 38 and 39, Paul is addressing the subject of security, which is based upon God's love and what Jesus accomplished on our behalf.

Thus, Paul is writing of our **PAST** salvation; something that took place the moment we believed in the Christ. What we received then, we shall forever have. It will never fail us. We passed from death unto life.

And further, we have to see that the **present walk of faith** is built upon the past. His work does save us in the past, all right; then, His work supports us daily. It is this Spiritual support that caused Paul to make such a clear statement found in verse one of chapter eight: "**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**"

He goes on to say that "**Christ condemned sin in the flesh**" (v 3), "**in order that** (for the purpose of) **the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.**"

Paul shows that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God (v 7), then boldly states, "**But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit**" (v 9).

Carefully, we ask: *'Is this a declarative position, only - one applies to all who have been saved because of Christ's work and the love of God? Or, should we look for Paul to build upon this foundation and take us to where we should be, living out the resurrected life, because of the declarative position?'* Later, (1st Cor. 3) we find that Paul answers both questions in the affirmative.

In order to learn discernment that satisfies the heart, every believer must see how Paul's words apply to lost people (how they were before and how they were saved) and, at the same time, understand that the letter is addressed to members of the Roman Church (believers that are saved and baptized, raising up to walk in the new). This point becomes huge when we come to another verse in Romans 8.

Notice, verse 13. "**For if YE** (church members) **live after the flesh, ye shall die.**" Can a believer die, we ask? To find the correct teaching, we must study the tenses of salvation.

Paul has no thought of one losing his salvation. On the contrary, he wants us to see that our past salvation is so secure and, because it is, the Holy Spirit draws

from both sides of the life of Christ, completing God's past, present salvation now, and at His coming, our future salvation.

My spiritual eyes are wide open to the Holy Spirit's working in us in the past, saving us by the shed blood of Christ. We were saved by the reconciliatory side of Christ when He gave His life on the cross. There, at Calvary, Jesus used one hand to lift us up and the other hand to unite us in the omnipotence of His Father's merciful Person. In Christ, we are accepted.

Once our present salvation is initiated, the Holy Spirit draws us to the resurrected side of the life of Christ. And, here, we must stress the importance of baptism - the ordinance which identifies us with Christ in the resurrected life.

"We were buried with Him by baptism into death...so we might *(the purpose of)* walk in newness of life, Romans 6:4.

Clearly, one cannot be saved without a gospel completion. There has to be a death, burial and resurrection (1st Cor. 15:3-4). And, it is true that every saved person dies to sin at Calvary, guaranteeing his resurrection.

Paul is concerned that we understand the gospel. He teaches us to build on the past foundation by faith, looking upward; whence, our salvation cometh. For Paul, the present day meaning of salvation lies in 8:4, "*In order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.*"

Romans 8 is one of my favorite passages because it reveals God's unending love; which is, and ought to be, our motivator to serve faithfully. The Holy Spirit gives comforting ease to the heart once we understand what the work of Christ accomplished through His reconciliatory blood.

In joyous service, we understand that past New Covenant salvation is a "**once and for all**" salvation. It's forever! But, no one wants to be saved **from** something, alone. We desire to be saved **to** something, as well. Thus, we are baptized with joy, raising up to walk (Ro 6:3-4) in that new life and give God glory. Limbo is an unscriptural word.

If the past salvation was understood correctly, so-called churches would stop insisting that members work on the old man. They would rather, live through the new man. Then, they would be Missionary Baptists and focus upon His finished work of Christ, wouldn't they?

Reading Paul's instruction in 2 Cor 5:17, solidifies our past salvation and serves as motivation for the present salvation. "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature* (part of the new creation): (here, Paul explains why) *old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*"

Further, present-salvation teaching is found in the Book of James, who reaches back to the beginning of when one was saved, as a reminder of who saved us and, for what purpose - "Of His own will begat He us."

The beloved John writes very clearly about present day salvation. "As He is, so are we in this present world," I Jn 4:17.

Present day salvation began on the day of Pentecost when men were moved by the Holy Spirit to "repent and be baptized" in the name of Jesus. Baptism serves as the identification mark for the convert and the mark of testimony for the church that Christ established. It's in the Great Commission of Mt 28:19. We can't change nor neglect the two pictorial ordinances; Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

James, like every Baptist preacher, lists many Christian principles of: "*swift to hear...slow to speak...depart from filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness...be doers of the word*"...etc.

Thus, the present-salvation - one that honors God, understands what Christ has done for every believer, as well as, the duty involved in obeying Scripture. Remember, Paul spoke of false teachers in his letter to Timothy.

As discerning truth comes, we have to confess that every verse of the Bible - all that is written, every word, is true; whether, we speak of God's eternal security or a believer's service.

There is eternal harmony in the teachings of tenses and the aspects of service. 1). God's declarative truth (what was granted to us in Christ) results in the reward of eternal life for all who are saved by Christ. 2). God's will within the church instructs us that there is a full (epi) reward of reigning with Christ in the coming kingdom on earth (See Mt 7:21, 13:11; Gal 5:21).

The LORD is coming! John records this future event in Revelation 22:12. "*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.*"