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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Raven at Shaws Corner, Redhill

on 6th. May, 1952

Text: "Salvation is of the Lord" - Jonah 2.9

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This lesson Jonah learned in deep waters; he learned it in a sad and solemn discovery of the sinfulness of his nature, the evil that he was capable of. Jonah's conduct as recalled here in this book was far from commendable. He was made to know and feel the evil of his own heart and the evil of his ways; it was through that he was led to this conclusion that, "Salvation is of the Lord". This truth is very easy to repeat, it is so easy to say, "Salvation is of the Lord", but to those who are taught of God and who are rightly exercised, who know something of their own lost condition, the terrible state in which they are by nature and what a heart they carry within them of deceitful and desperate wickedness, - to such salvation becomes a very great matter. We have need to beware of light, superficial views of salvation. If our views of salvation are light and superficial it shows that our views of sin are light and superficial and that our views of God are light and superficial. If we have right thoughts of God, right views of sin, then salvation will be indeed a weighty matter. "What must I do to be saved?" will become a burning pressing question.

Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the mountains and he that trusts in his own heart is a fool; no man is able to do a single hand's turn toward his own salvation. When men think they can do something they are under a most awful delusion. Alas it is a delusion that is very common among men; it is the most natural thing in the world for men to fall into this delusion that they can do something toward their own salvation. We all have a principle that tends in that direction and nothing but the solemn, powerful teaching of the Holy Spirit will bring us off those quick-sands, off that perilous ground, to put our trust solely in the Lord Himself. "Salvation is of the Lord", and we only feel and confess this to be true as we find death stamped upon everything of the creature. The Apostle said, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." (2 Cor. 1.9) The sentence of death; death within you, all about you. Man looks into his own heart and he finds nothing but the savour of death there. He looks into a dream house if he looks upon his understanding, his affection, his memory; whatever carnal faculty he looks upon there is death stamped upon it, the sentence of death, so that he can do nothing toward his own salvation. The more he tries, the worse he gets, the deeper he sinks in the mire as he struggles to get out of it. He that trusts in his own heart is a fool. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the

LORD". (Jer.17.5) What a mercy it is when the Lord teaches a poor sinner this great and solemn lesson that Jonah so effectually learned, that "Salvation is of the Lord" and of the Lord alone. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law." (Ps.94.12) and the Lord brings His word into the heart and conscience, that word which Paul says is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb.4.12) It makes a man know that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do". "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether." (Ps.139.1-4) When that is felt, when the eye of Infinite holiness is looking upon the soul and looking into it, piercing it through and through, what a case a man finds himself to be in, a sinful case, a guilty case, deep in it and getting deeper and deeper.

The law came that the offence might abound; there is this abounding of the offence. A poor man feels himself to be a sinner and as he goes on his sense of sinnership increases, his sense of shame deepens, his helplessness becomes more and more real to him, and his awful responsibility as a sinner before God becomes more weighty, more crushing to him. What must I do to be saved? Where may such a wretch as I fly? What refuge is there for such a sinner? What hope can there be? "Salvation is of the Lord". It is in this way that poor people have to learn this lesson, learn what a great things salvation is, so great that none but Jehovah Himself can accomplish it. Salvation to reach such a sensible guilty soul, to reach such a lost sinner, must be nothing less than the mighty arm of divine, sovereign grace reaching from heaven to pluck him as a brand from the burning; "Salvation is of the Lord". In vain a sinner seeks salvation from other quarters. He finds in every such pot there is death. There is curse and death in every stream but that which flows from Bethlehem. Like the woman who spent her all on physicians and was nothing better but rather worse and deep in poverty as a result, so it is with people who have gone here and there seeking for relief. They have tried this ministry and the other and anything but Jesus and Him crucified; and poor people have found death in it, no help for a lost soul, no help for a helpless sinner, nothing to meet a needy case. So they go on, they try one hiding place after another. Left to ourselves we would make lies our refuge. The natural bent of the human mind is to seek anywhere but to the Lord Himself, to receive any Saviour but Jesus Christ for He is despised and rejected of men. At length He powerfully brings a person to this spot where he falls down and there is none to help, where he is at his wits end, where he

feels, as the prophet said, his hope is perished from the Lord. "I am as a man that had no strength." "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do". (2 Chron.20.12) That is a good spot to be brought to. The Lord will manifest Himself and will seal this lesson upon the heart, "Salvation is of the Lord".

"But there's a voice of sovereign grace  
Sounds from the sacred word;  
"Ho! ye despairing sinners come,  
And trust upon the Lord."

My soul obeys the almighty call,  
And runs to this relief;  
I would believe thy promise, Lord;  
O help my unbelief."

"Salvation is of the Lord". Salvation from sin, from its dominion, from the love of it. It is of the Lord alone. No man can deliver his own soul, can get this dreadful poison out of him; no man can do it, sin is such a dire evil that no man can by any means ransom his brother, neither can any man by any means heal his own soul from that dread disease. Salvation from sin is of the Lord and thus His people have to prove it; the apostle Paul found it so, O he found sin to be a heavy burden from which he could get no deliverance until he was able to look to Jesus, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death". (Rom.7.24) Mr.Philpot said that sin stuck closer to him than the collar of his coat; he found it ever present with him, always intruding, defiling his most sacred duties, interfering with his most serious thoughts, his prayers, his meditating, his preaching, everything he did was mixed with sin. When this sad experience is entered into a poor man finds himself without power, he has no might against this great company, he cannot quell the life of sin within him. One says,

"Such dismal storms are raised within,  
By Satan and indwelling sin,  
Which all my soul with horror shake;  
O save me for thy mercies' sake."

Such find that there is no deliverance but of the Lord Himself. "Salvation is of the Lord". The Father sent His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to save His people from their sins, to save them from the pollution of sin, to heal them from that sad malady of sin. There is salvation in no other and a poor sinner who is in this experience can find no relief, no ray of hope in his poor soul, until the blessed Spirit takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to him; and what good news it is when he is able to receive these good tidings that Jesus is a Saviour. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief". (1 Tim. 1.15) O He is able to break the fetters, loose the poor prisoner and answer the petition that rises from a sin-polluted heart,

"Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish."  
(Ps.39.8)

"Salvation is of the Lord" This has to be solemnly proved; it is not a mere theory. I am afraid some people are only theological sinners, they are only sinners because it is the orthodox thing to be a sinner. A mere notional sinnership will only amount to a piece of deception. To be a notional sinner, a theological sinner, is not to be a broken-hearted sinner, it is not to be a contrite sinner. It is a mere concession, perhaps to a prevailing opinion of a body of people with which you are associated. Sometimes people talk about being great sinners but if the minister should point out to them faithfully and clearly some things in them in which they are sinners against God and their fellow-creatures, immediately they resent it, immediately they reject it. O no! they are not sinners in that way; of course they are very, very vile sinners in their soul's feelings, they are very humble before God but they are not humble before God in respect of the things they are guilty of; they will be always justifying themselves on account of these things. But when people are told that by the Holy Spirit they are brought off all this self-flattery and self-deceit; their hearts are broken, their iniquities have gone over their head, their burden is too heavy for them, their sinfulness is their daily grief, they see sins in their prayers and dirt in the bottom of their prayers, they sin in everything they do and everything they say. "Behold, I am vile" said Job, and in this way they learn that salvation from the guilt of sin is from the Lord alone. Only the Lord can purge the conscience from guilt, from dead works. Only the Lord can speak peace in a guilty, burdened heart and conscience and that peace can only come by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin. The Apostle says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9.4) All salvation from guilt is of the Lord and He alone can take out every stain of guilt, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow". Only the Lord can save from the curse of the law. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point is guilty of all" (James 2.10) The man that only offends against one commandment he has broken the whole law, one sin is enough to make a man into a great sinner; one sin is enough to bring him under the condemnation of God's most holy law and nothing can deliver a man from it but the Lord Himself. Salvation from the curse of the law is, and must be, of the Lord. Therefore it is written, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us". (Gal.3.13) O what a mighty deliverance He has wrought! The dear Son of God came from heaven and dwelt among us, took our very nature that in it He might bear the sin of His people and endure the

curse, drink up the cup of wrath and accomplish eternal redemption for them, bring in everlasting salvation and make their standing more secure than it was before they fell.

"Salvation is of the Lord". Then He can bring this into a sinner's heart and conscience with efficacious power; the mere notion of Gospel truth is not enough. We may go to hell with our heads stored with Gospel notions but we need the knowledge of salvation by the remission of our sins for Christ's sake, the knowledge that the apostle speaks of, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". (2 Cor.4.6) When you consider how the heart of a sinner is by enmity and unbelief and pride shut up against the message of the Gospel, will not endure sound doctrine, receives not the love of the truth, is ready to receive anything, everything but the truth; when you consider the hardened state in which we are, the rebellion against God in which we are ourselves; who can bring such sinners to the knowledge of salvation? Salvation is of the Lord. It is the Spirit who alone can bring poor people from such hardness, such ignorance, such unbelief, such enmity, such worldliness, such utter foolishness, unto the true knowledge of God's dear Son. O He is stronger than the strong one armed, The Lord Jesus comes by His Spirit to abide,

"This heart I bought with blood," he says,  
And now it shall be mine"

O what hardened sinners He has brought to His feet, what obdurate hearts have been broken, and how many vile sinners have been made to weep penitential tears under the gracious power of this Holy Spirit of God who is able to take away a heart of stone and give a heart of flesh, who is able to take a poor rebel, hating God and hating all godliness, and reconcile him. "Salvation is of the Lord". The apostle Paul himself tells of his conversion, what a state he was brought from, how he was immersed in unbelief, yet bad as his state was, deeply fallen and sunken as he was, grace got the victory, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus". It is by the grace of God that I am what I am. O the wondrous grace! O the triumphs grace has won! "Salvation is of the Lord".

In these sacred records we have many accounts of poor sinners who were far off from God, but who were made nigh by the blood of Christ and through Him had access by one spirit to the Father. You look at those Ephesian sinners, of whom these very solemn words were spoken, they were "dead in trespasses and sins". Paul tells what their course of life was, and the case was hopeless but for grace. See what grace did for these Ephesians. That has encouraged me wonderfully in the past. Many and many a time I have tried to remind the Lord of these Ephesian sinners and said, Lord, Thou didst bless them, wilt Thou not

bless me? Thou didst convert them, wilt Thou not convert me? Thou didst bring them near to Thyself, wilt Thou not bring me near? "Salvation is of the Lord"

Then there is the power of Satan who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking who he may devour. Who can save from Satan's power but the Lord Himself. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". O Christ is infinitely stronger than the devil; the devil is a chained enemy who cannot go one fraction of an inch beyond the length of his chain and the Lord has so chained him that he shall not devour one sheep of Christ's flock. He may terrify them, he may even be permitted to maul them somewhat, but he shall not destroy them; the Lord will save them from the paw of the lion and of the bear. "Salvation is of the Lord". Then you have all the snares that encompass the feet of the child of God, all the things which procure our fall. "Salvation is of the Lord". "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death" (Ps.68.20) and salvation to the uttermost. He who begins to save, never forsakes His work, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come to God by Him and so He will carry on His great work of salvation in them, and He will finally save them right into heaven. Yes, the last act of almighty grace on behalf of the believer will be his being raised to a throne of glory, being taken to be with Christ which is far better where he will enter into a realisation of all that salvation means, eternal salvation. Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. "Salvation is of the Lord". If we are taught of God this lesson is one that we shall surely learn, learn it painfully, learn it over and over again, for we are very forgetful. Sometimes we seem to have made a little progress in the school of Christ and then find we have slipped right back and seem to have forgotten everything we learned and we have to begin again from the ABC "Salvation is of the Lord". Did we learn it a little yesterday? We need to learn it again today. Have we proved it in days past? Have we been brought up out of the horrible pit and made to ascribe the whole of our salvation to the Lord? We need the same lesson afresh, we need fresh dealings of God with our souls, and we need Him ever to deal with us so that this salvation becomes to us the matter of the greatest importance and most solemn moment. May the Lord add His blessing. Amen

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