

Sunday December 17th sermon: "Faith is the Gift of God – Salvation is of the Lord! (Pt 4)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

1 Corinthians 2:9-14; John 6:35-66

Jonah teaches us that Salvation Belongs to the Lord!

Here is the crucial fact: the Holy Ghost must take away our unbelief if we are to believe Gospel truth and be saved. We must be granted faith by the power of the Holy Ghost's work of conversion in our hearts. Only then, by faith, can we lay hold of the Gospel!

Without regeneration, the natural man is at enmity with God. But the work of the Spirit makes us alive to God, and works obedience in us, and faith to trust in Christ and His Gospel unto salvation.

Without that Holy Ghost work in us, no one can obey, or follow, or believe, or call upon God for mercy.

We have no control over the working of the Holy Ghost, in ourselves, and certainly not in others.

Paul specifically describes the limits of what natural, sinful men can do or know. The only way men can know the things that God has given to us is by the work of the Holy Ghost. That is, in fact, the reason that God imparts His Spirit to our hearts in the first place, so that we can know the things of God that we otherwise could never know.

The natural man, without the work of the Spirit, does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. He might hear them, and be able to repeat them, and even understand them, but he cannot and will not believe on them, nor trust in them at all. Instead, Paul says they are foolishness and a stumbling block to the man without the Spirit of God.

In 1 Corinthians 12:3, Paul sharpens his point: Nobody can declare that Jesus is the Lord, except by the Holy Ghost. This is highly significant, since one must confess Jesus as Lord before one can be saved.

Jesus taught in His Own ministry that it takes a special, selective work by God upon a sinner before that sinner can trust in Christ unto salvation. Everyone whom God first gives to Christ, will surely come to Christ, and nobody can come to Christ unless the Father draws that man to Christ. It takes a special teaching of that man by God in order for him to be drawn to Christ.

Christ taught us that it is the Spirit that makes sinners alive, not sacraments.

Finally, no one can come to Christ, unless coming to Christ is given to that poor man by the Father.

In Ephesians 2, Paul makes it clear, that we are all dead in our sins, unless the Spirit quickens us, and causes us to trust in Christ. That quickening and believing are described as the gift of God to us!

That gift of faith is given to us by God by the powerful working of the Holy Ghost in all the Lord's people, and without that Spirit work, no one can believe and be saved.

We dare not miss the mighty power of God to save us – far more powerful than the miracle of the great fish that rescued Jonah from the sea. Salvation requires a miraculous power in the hearts and minds of sinners, to believe God's promises and call upon Him for mercy!

We must give joyful thanks always for the miracle of our salvation! The wonders of the incarnation, and the sacrifice of God's Lamb, ought to astound us!

But let us not forget the power wrought in our own minds and hearts by the Holy Ghost, to believe the Gospel and trust in Jesus!

Lost men are naturally helpless to believe the Gospel under their own steam, and yet in each of our believing hearts, there has been a powerful work of the Holy Ghost to convert us!

That work is far more powerful than God's rescue of Jonah from the sea!

We all like to think of ourselves as sweet and innocent compared to the wicked bloody men of Nineveh, but in reality, we were just as lost and helpless and hopeless to believe God's word as they all were!

Yet the Holy Ghost wrought in us all an astounding work!

We must pray that God will work the same work in our lost friends and family members who have not yet believed, and be faithful to proclaim the Gospel to them all.

No wonder we love the words to that hymn by John Hart Stockton:

Come, every soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord;
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His Word.

For Jesus shed His precious blood
Rich blessings to bestow;
Plunge now into the crimson flood
That washeth white as snow.

Yes, Jesus is the Truth, the Way,
That leads you into rest;
Believe in Him without delay,
And you are fully blest.

Only trust Him! Only trust Him!
Only trust Him now!
He will save you! He will save you!
He will save you now!