

Household Salvation

Acts 16:31, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" I remember I was preaching on this text in Jamaica, New York, and I told them that many people when quoting this text would leave off that last three words and that I thank God for these three glorious words and that nobody would ever misquote this text. The audience looked a little disturbed so, I followed their gaze to the wall above my head. There on the wall of the church was the **THIS** text, *with the same omission*. If this verse could speak, I'm sure it would complain about being misquoted so often. Many verses are continually abused and distorted by being misquoted.

When Paul said to the Philippine jailer, "*Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,*" he did not stop there, so why should we? Paul did not say that if he believed, **one thing** would happen, he said **two things would happen**. The second thing that would happen was far greater than the first. Why do we misquote and limit this glorious promise? Why quote only one of the two things Paul mentioned? Why this strange silence concerning those wonderful words: "*and thy house?*" The text says, "*Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" It teaches that if a man believes God for the salvation of his soul, he will be saved, **BUT** this text also teaches that if he believes, God will also save his household! God will as surely save this man's household for his faith, as He saves that man's soul for his faith. This text expressly declares it is the will of God that the whole family of believers should be saved. And the condition of their being saved is for believers to ask and believe that God will save their household.

Whenever anyone comes to God and asks God to save him and he [in Spirit-given faith] believes that God that very moment does so, he can go from God's presence knowing of a surety that he is saved. He can know absolutely, positively that he is saved! Why? Because God says so. God says, "*Believe and thou shalt be saved.*" Now, if, that same person asks God to save his family and he expresses the same kind of faith which he believed when he believed for his own salvation . . . that is, he believes God for their salvation (*believes that God, in His own time and in His own wonderful way, will save them*) . . . he can know of a surety that God will save them. Why? Because God says, "*Believe and thy house shall be saved.*"

This is surely Good-News! Could there be any more welcomed news to believers with loved ones unsaved, than that God pledges His Word of honor to hear and answer believing prayer for the household of a Christian? The greatest desire of any believer should be to stand before God and say, "*Here is my household!*"

Mark.11:24 teaches, "*What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*" and Acts 16:31 teaches, "*Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved - and thy house!*"

Of course, God won't save a family member, *unless they believe for themselves*. Their "*believing*" is not our part, that is God's part. Our part is to ask God to save them and believe that He will do so. God's part is so to move upon them in such a way that they are convicted of sin, will see their need as they never saw it before, and, *of their own free will*, will be saved.

Note that this text does **NOT** say, "*If we pray for them to be saved,*" but, rather, it says, "*Believe...and they shall be saved.*" It is not **prayer** ALONE that save them, it is *believing*

prayer. The believer must ask in faith believing. Only when he prays **believing** for their salvation, has God promised to save them. As the believer prays, believing for their salvation, does God promise to save them.

Of course, they will **not** be saved unless they believe for themselves, but they will believe for themselves and be saved, if the believer **believing**, asks God to save his household and trusts God to bring that to pass.

1. HOUSEHOLD SALVATION IS IN HARMONY WITH THE CONSTITUTION OF THINGS ON EARTH

God has set mankind in families. God said, "*It is not good that man should be alone.*" God ordained the ordinance of marriage and He looks on the family as a unit. The children in a family are part of the father and mother. When parents are saved, it is God's desire to save their family. Children are no more a part of the "*household*" than Parents are. If son believes God for the salvation of his parents, God gives him the same promise.

*"God will turn the heart of the father to the children,
and the heart of the children to their fathers" - Malachi 4:6*

That's what happens in every genuine revival. Believing parents begin praying for the unsaved children and the believing children began praying for their unsaved parents.

Every Christian is a member of a family. Why should it be thought so incredible that God gives a promise for the salvation of a family? God ordained families and He wants to save families.

2. HOUSEHOLD SALVATION IS IN HARMONY WITH THINGS IN HEAVEN

Heaven is built on the family principle. God speaks of Heaven above as a "*home*." Jesus said, "*in My Father's house.*" The Bible describes the church as a family. It states, "*The whole family in heaven and earth.*" God's people are called, "*The household of faith.*" We are taught to pray, "*Our Father, in Heaven.*" We are told that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . . father, son and grandson . . . "*will all sit together in the kingdom of Heaven.*"

It is God's stated desire to save the whole family of a Christian so that the family as a unit will be together in Heaven. God wants our Christian's home on earth to be a miniature Heaven and, to make this possible, He promises to answer believing prayer and being this to pass.

Do you believe that this promise in Acts 16:31 is given to you? We grant that the first part of this verse is ours, "*Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" Then why can't we believe that the second part of this verse ("*. . . and thy house.*") is for us also? God says, "*You, and your house will be saved.*" God has joined us, and our household, together. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

Don't say, "*I don't have that wonderful kind of faith to believe for my whole family.*" You have faith, or you would never be saved. The Spirit of God imparted faith to you at your

conversion. Where is your faith? God gave you the faith, you put it to work and it saved you. Why do you think that God gave you faith? - Merely to save yourself? No! He gave us faith for our own salvation **first** and then for the salvation of others, beginning with our household. Use your faith, that saved your soul, to save the souls of others, particularly those of your household. It is a wonderful thing when God saves a man in response to his faith, however, it is a more wonderful thing when God saves a man's family in response to his faith. When the first part of this text is believed, **one soul is saved**. When the second part is believed, **the whole household is saved**. No wonder Satan tries to keep us from seeing and believing the whole of this promise.

3. HOUSEHOLD SALVATION IS TAUGHT ALL THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

This precious truth is not just one isolated passage of Scripture. This wonderful truth is taught throughout the whole Bible. The Bible is full of it. The marvel is that this comforting, challenging truth is so little known.

Look at the first invitation given in the Bible, "*And the Lord said unto Noah, 'Come thou and all thy house into the ark'*" (Genesis 7:1). Right at the very beginning of the Bible, God lets it be known that His will is not to save a man alone, but all his house. What was Noah's response to this offered privilege? "*By faith Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house*" (Hebrews 11:7). Noah believed God would give him his family (including his three daughters-in-laws). As proof of his faith, he prepared an ark with room for all his family. What was God's response to Noah's faith? God gave him every member of his family, "*for eight souls were saved through the flood.*" The very first example of family salvation in the Bible included the **in-laws**, those brought into the family through marriage

Look at the **Passover** (Exodus 12), a divine illustration of faith for a family. God saved Israel that night by families. The father was to "*take a lamb for an house*" and sprinkle the blood on the door and, *because of his faith*, the whole family was saved.

Rahab (Joshua 2) is another example of family salvation. She lived on the wall of the doomed city of Jericho. When the fall of the city was imminent, she was given a promise of salvation. ***But Rahab did not want to be saved alone!***

Who wants to be saved alone? If we are content to be saved alone and are not deeply concerned for the salvation of our loved ones, we need to be saved from selfishness! When Rahab voiced her faith to the two men, she asked not only for her own salvation, she said, "*I pray that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have.*" Some of her brothers and sisters were married. they had children, Rahab could not think of them all being destroyed in the judgment upon the city, so she pleaded for their salvation, including all they had.

What did God do about that? What was His response to her believing prayer? Just what God will do for us today. God gave Rahab just what she went after, "*And Joshua saved Rahab alive, and her father's household, AND ALL THAT SHE HAD*" (Joshua 6:25).

Consider Joshua himself as he stands before Israel and says, "*Choose you this day whom*

ye will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Here was a public statement of Joshua's faith, that his household would serve God. **How did he know they would?** He knew it by faith. He is so certain his family will serve God that he is ready to stand before a whole nation, in general assembly, and proclaim the fact.

You say, "*Suppose they had not served God?*" Joshua supposed no such thing. He believed God that they would serve Him. When you really believe God will do a thing, we do not run around supposing the opposite. Here is where many Christians fail to offer believing prayer for their family. They "*pray and worry*" . . . worry and pray. If they really believed God was going to save their family, they would pray *and praise*. They would present their supplication "*with thanksgiving*," knowing for certain that God would save their family. However, because they do not really believe, they pray "*worrying*." When we believe we do not worry and when we worry, we do not really believe.

If we could only recognize that it is the will of God to save our whole household. It is not God's will that any should perish. God is pledged to answer believing prayer and, if we will wait before God in prayer, asking Him to give us faith enough to claim our family's salvation, then God, by His Spirit, will give us the assurance of their salvation. From that moment we will pray (not with worrying) but with thanksgiving, praising God for the answer before it comes, through faith.

Through faith "*women received their dead raised to life again*" (Hebrews 11:35). This is true in the spiritual realm, as many a believing woman can testify.

Joshua did not worry. He believed God and God honored Joshua's faith. His family served God.

The same precious truth is found hidden in the arithmetic of the book of Job. In the first chapter, we are told of Job's possession. They are carefully enumerated, "*His substance also was 7000 yoke of oxen, and 500 donkeys.*" In addition to these we read, "*There were born unto him 7 SONS AND 3 DAUGHTERS.*" There is no word that Job's children honored God in their lives. (They may have done so, but Scripture does not record it.) They spend much of their time feasting and dancing. But their father prayed for them unceasingly. "*And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for God said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned, Thus did Job continually* (Job 1:5).

The calamity that befell Job, swept away all his cattle and his entire family. In that terrible trial, however, Job's faith stood fast. In the last chapter of the story, God rewarded him by giving him **double** of all that he had before: "*Also the Lord gave Job TWICE AS MUCH as he had before.*" Notice the arithmetic, the 1000's and 100's of each kind of cattle were doubled, "*So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, for he had 14,000 sheep, and 6000 camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a 1000 donkeys. He had also 7 sons and three daughters*" (Job 42:12-13).

We are told that God gave Job **twice as much**. All the possessions are doubled, why not his children? The explanation is that although the cattle were destroyed forever, Job's children were still alive in the other world, and not only that, but they were in God's care, there where

their father would one day meet them.

Had they gone to the realm of the unsaved dead, Job would never have seen them again. They would have been gone indeed. But, he still had them. They were not lost, only gone before into the abode of the righteous, where later he would join them. They were his forever, because he prayed for them continually and God is faithful in answering such prayer.

Take the case of Cornelius in Acts 10. He was a centurion in the Roman army, a heathen man who had heard of the one true God. He prayed for salvation, and God sent an angel with this message, "*Send for Peter, who shall tell thee words, **WHEREBY THOU AND ALL THY HOUSE SHALL BE SAVED.***" Why did God include Cornelius' house? Because it was God's desire to save, not this man alone, but all of his family. So the promise included his house.

Here we are at the other end of the Bible, and the same truth stares us in the face. And Cornelius took God at His word. He went out and "*called together his kinsmen and near friends.*" Note, the angel of God had said not a word about "*near friends,*" but this man pushed out the bounds of God's promise to include some special friends of his whose salvation he desired, as well as his own, **and that of his household!**

And what did God do about this? He honored Cornelius' faith and, while Peter was preaching, "*the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word.*"

The same God who gave Noah his daughter-in-laws; Who gave Rahab all she had prayed for; here gives Cornelius, not only his family, but also the friends whom his faith and compassion embraced.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible, we see that it is God's express desire to save the whole family of a believer. Not only to the Philippine jailer, but to others in Bible history and to us today, God says, "*Believe . . . and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*"

4. HOUSEHOLD SALVATION HAS MARKED THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH MEN ALL THROUGH HISTORY

Since the canon of Scripture closed God has been honoring the faith of men and women for the saving of their household. History records, in the fifth century, that a Christian mother went to the Bishop of Milan and implored him, "*with tears,*" to speak to her prodigal son. The Bishop marked her tears and with prophetic insight said, "*It is impossible that the child of such prayers could ever be lost.*" That mother was Monica, and her son the saintly Augustine, converted to God by the faith of a mother who would not let God go. She gave God no rest, day or night, until her boy was saved.

Catherine Booth is reported to have prayed, "*O God, I will not stand before Thee without all my children.*" She was actually not willing to be saved without them. What was God's answer to such passionate pleading and faith? Everyone one of them was saved and became a preacher of the Gospel

Jonathan Edwards, in a moment of intimacy with God, is said to have claimed from God that not one of his seed would ever be lost. After three generations, one who had made investigation, could not find one of his descendants who was not a decided Christian.

The Gordon Bible Theological Seminary (Use to be just plain Bible School) was founded by Dr. A.J. Gordon. His wife said, "*God has given every parent the privilege of claiming his children for God. If a parent would plead **and believe** God's promise, the child of such faith would never be lost. God had given her five children. From their birth she claimed and believed God for their salvation. As the children grew up, they one by one accepted Christ.*"

It is faith like this that God honors. A mother, convicted of this truth, said, "*I have three grown-up children. One is backslidden, a girl of 18, who is worldly and uninterested in spiritual things, and two sons, who are unsaved.*" She saw the meaning of Acts 16:31 and began to pray with faith. Her Pastor said, "*She herself was a different person. Instead of worrying over her children, she became filled with joy and peace through believing.*"

In a week, or two, the younger of the two boys was converted, and later went to Bible college. The daughter came back to God. About a year later, the older son was saved, So, the whole family was united in Christ.

This same mother began praying for her sister and her family, who lived about fifty miles away. One by one, they accepted the Lord. Nine members in two families were saved **because a mother took God at His word and believed for her household.**

In New York City, a man arose at the close of a service, and gave a ringing testimony for Christ. He closed by saying, "*Five years ago, a dying mother called her daughter to her bedside and told her how glad she was that all her children would be with her in Heaven. The daughter said, 'Why, mother, what about John? The dying mother then quoted the words, 'Believe and thou shalt be saved, **and thy house**'"* The man said, "*I am that son, picked up from the gutter by a God who answers prayer.*"

A Pastor in Chicago said, "*His father was converted in middle life. He saw the meaning of Acts 16:31. He claimed his household for God. He had twelve children, none of whom was saved. Five were the under the age of accountability. God at once began to deal with the seven older children and, before long, everyone of them came to Christ. As the other five grew up they too turned to God, **until the entire twelve were saved.***"

A mother heard a message on Acts 16:31. She had three grown-up children and a husband, all 4 unsaved. She claimed her household for God and later testified that her three children were saved. and her husband was attending church.