

# Salvation Unto Obedience

By John Thiel, [mp3](#)

*Scripture reading: Psalm 119:1 Blessed [are] the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. 2 Blessed [are] they that keep his testimonies, [and that] seek him with the whole heart. 3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.*

Jesus says, Come to Me, and I will give you rest. Week by week we gather together to drink from the fountain the water of life. This is the invitation of the Bible to us. This is why we gather, so that we might not only drink at home, but drink from where the Lord has said we should be – we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We are to drink of His word together, and He will be there to bless in His presence with us.

**Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.**

This is an impetus call to come if you are thirsty. This is why God's children gather together on the Sabbath day, to come to the waters of life.

**Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.**

Are you thirsting for the water of life? Don't we need this in the time in which we are living? We are living in a world of sin in these last days that is specifically spoken of as being one of great peril, more so than any other time. We are in a dry and thirsty land, and we are invited to come and drink.

**Isaiah 12:1 And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.**

God does become grieved (angry) because of our sins. But in His lovingkindness and mercy His anger is turned away and He turns to us and comforts us.

**Isaiah 12:2 Behold, God [is] my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH [is] my strength and [my] song; he also is become my salvation. 3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.**

We want to draw water out of the wells of salvation, the water of life and salvation. We desire to quench our thirst because of the sins that have created dearth and dryness of spirit in our soul. My burden as a preacher for God is to make salvation plain and practical. This has been the burden of my heart all through my years of ministry; and this burden has been accentuated by the reading of the Spirit of Prophecy. And this no doubt will burden any human being who listens and also tries to quench his thirst. What do we want to drink in practical reality?

## Practical Drinking

**Many of those for whom our ministers labor are ignorant of the truths of the Bible and the requirements of God, and the simplest lessons on practical godliness come to them as a new revelation. {GW 153.1}**

I have experienced this frequently. People have come and heard the ministry of God's word, and they would say, Wow, I've never heard it like that before; because the simple lessons on practical godliness come to them as a new revelation. Although they have heard the messages before, it is a new revelation because it relates itself to practical life.

**These need to know what is truth, and in laboring for them the minister should not take up lines of thought that will simply please the fancy or gratify curiosity. Let him instead break the bread of life to these starving souls. Never should he preach a sermon that does not help his hearers to see more plainly what they must do to be saved. {Ibid.}**

To show plainly what we must do to be saved – this statement has been the guideline for my preaching ministry over the years.

**Ministers need to have a more clear, simple manner in presenting the truth as it is in Jesus. Their own minds need to comprehend the great plan of salvation more fully. Then they can carry the minds of the hearers away from earthly things to the spiritual and eternal. There are many who want to know what they must do to be saved. They want a plain and clear explanation of the steps requisite in conversion, and there should not a sermon be given unless a portion of that discourse is to especially make plain the way that sinners may come to Christ and be saved. They should point them to Christ, as did John, and with touching simplicity, their hearts aglow with the love of Christ, say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Strong and earnest appeals should be made to the sinner to repent and be converted. {1SM 157.1}**

The water of life must be drawn out of the wells of salvation and made plain and clear so that the thirsting soul who is struggling with his own personal shortcomings and sins may know specifically and plainly and practically from God's word how to be saved out of that condition. This is what God's counsels tell us. It has to do with the water; but this is obviously a symbolic meaning. The word of God is to be the water that is to quench the thirst of a sin-sick soul. We are living today under the ministry of many different churches who are preaching the word of God, but what are they doing with that water? As the people listen to the water of salvation drawn from the well of salvation, what is actually happening to that water as these men are preaching?

## Polluted Waters

God is here speaking to the ministers, against Israel's shepherds:

**Ezekiel 34:18 [Seemeth it] a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? 19 And [as for] my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.**

What is God saying here? The water that is drawn from the well of salvation has become polluted by the ones who are preaching it. They have fed themselves, and they then pass it out to the flock, and the flock is getting polluted water, a polluted word. How is this water polluted?

**The immediate requirements, the present trials-- for these, men and women need present help. {GW 153.2}**

What do you need help for? What do we need help in reference to? *The immediate requirements* of my life, *the present trials* that I am going through. *Men and women need present help* for those things.

**The minister may take a high range into the heavens by poetical descriptions and fanciful presentations, which please the senses and feed the imagination, but which do not touch the life experience, the daily necessities. {Ibid.}**

This is what we need – something that touches the life experience, the daily necessities. But the fanciful eloquence and presentations, the poetical descriptions (which are very tantalising to the imagination and give you a sort of sense of warmth), what is all this doing? It is failing to satisfy the thirst of the soul practically.

**He may think that by his fanciful eloquence he has fed the flock of God; his hearers may think that they never before saw the truth clothed in language so beautiful. But trace, from cause to effect, the ecstasy of feeling caused by these fanciful representations, and it will be seen that although some truths may have been presented, such sermons do not fortify the hearers for the daily battles of life. {Ibid.}**

They do not fortify; therefore the drinking of the water from the well of salvation doesn't have its desired effect in reality to satisfy the cravings to understand the immediate requirements for the present trials and the answers to my practical reality needs in salvation. I am very impressed with how the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy help us understand how the water becomes polluted. Here in our modern day, the pollution of the waters of salvation is very pronounced in the preachers of modern-day Christianity.

**From the pulpits of today the words are uttered: "Believe, only believe. Have faith in Christ; you have nothing to do with the old law, only trust in Christ." How different is this from the words of the apostle who declares that faith without works is dead. He says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). {FW 89.2}**

The practicality of God's word is polluted by this thought which is taught from the pulpits: to believe in Jesus. They make a poetical, fanciful representation of Jesus, and people swoon under those kinds of preaching. But when it comes to the action that God wants them to pursue, it doesn't happen.

**We must have that faith that works by love and purifies the soul. {Ibid.}**

A faith that *works*. There is that language: *works*. "Urgh!" And I hear people say, "Stop preaching works!" Yet we need to understand, as we drink the waters of salvation, the correct position of the works in their connection with faith.

**Many seek to substitute a superficial faith for uprightness of life and think through this to obtain salvation. {Ibid.}**

So we want to drink of the pure water of life. But to do this we need to get some clarification of this pollution, so that we can bring the pure water. It's like a filter of Jesus that is given to us in the Spirit of Prophecy, to filter the water so that we can get it pure.

**"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. ... It is essential to have faith in Jesus, and to believe you are saved through Him; {1SM 373.1}**

It is essential to believe in Jesus, that we might be saved through Him;

**...but there is danger in taking the position that many do take in saying, "I am saved." Many have said: "You must do good works, and you will live"; but apart from Christ no one can do good works. Many at the present day say, "Believe, only believe, and live." Faith and works go together, believing and doing are blended. The Lord requires no less of the soul now, than He required of Adam in Paradise before he fell-- perfect obedience, unblemished righteousness. The requirement of God under the covenant of grace is just as broad as the requirement He made in Paradise--harmony with His law, which is holy, and just, and good. The gospel does not weaken the claims of the law; it exalts the law and makes it honorable. Under the New Testament, no less is required than was required under the Old Testament. Let no one take up with the delusion so pleasant to the natural heart, that God will accept of sincerity, no matter what may be the faith, no matter how imperfect may be the life. God requires of His child perfect obedience. {*Ibid.*}**

We want to draw from the well of salvation the water of life unpolluted by any rationalisation. As when you put the bucket down into the well to draw the water, I want to drop the container into the well by contemplating the following words:

**While we are to be in harmony with God's law, we are not saved by the works of the law, yet we cannot be saved without obedience. The law is the standard by which character is measured. But we cannot possibly keep the commandments of God without the regenerating grace of Christ. Jesus alone can cleanse us from all sin. He does not save us by law, neither will He save us in disobedience to law. {FW 95.3}**

This is the container of understanding which we want to drink from; and we want to drink from those waters in a practical measure.

## **Motivation of Love**

It is the motivation of love that is to save us from sin. But what is needed to bring this love that will save me from sin into action? Let the water of life give us the answer. Love must motivate me to bring the action of keeping God's commandments, His do's and don'ts, into the reality of my life.

**Our love to Christ will be in proportion to the depth of our conviction of sin, {FW 96.1}**

What I need to cause me to act and obey is love. And how is this love brought into prominence, and the proportion of this love raised higher and higher?

**Our love to Christ will be in proportion to the depth of our conviction of sin, and by the law is the knowledge of sin. {Ibid.}**

Can you see what actually pollutes the meditation in what we are generally hearing? “Just believe in Jesus; He loves you! Appreciate His love! and you will be saved.” But how can you appreciate His love unless you have the law and you hear from the waters of salvation the law that tells you how bad you are? You cannot appreciate the love of Jesus. This is exactly what is written:

**Psalm 119:97 O how love I thy law! it [is] my meditation all the day.**

“I love God’s law;” and yet I hear people preaching that the law is not important for salvation. Oh yes, it is. It says very emphatically in the Psalms that the law will bring me salvation. “Our love to Christ will be in proportion to the depth of our conviction of sin, and by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

**But as we see ourselves [by the law], let us look away to Jesus, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity. {Ibid.}**

So the law shows me what an iniquitous person I am, and then, when I see it in all its enormity, I look to Jesus, and I see Him who redeemed me from all iniquity; and how He does that is so important.

**By faith take hold of the merits of Christ, and the soul-cleansing blood will be applied. The more clearly we see the evils and perils to which we have been exposed, the more grateful shall we be for deliverance through Christ. {Ibid.}**

As I see through the law the perils and evils that I am exposed to (and remember, God’s law is His character), *the more grateful shall I be for deliverance through Christ.*

**The gospel of Christ does not give men license to break the law, for it was through transgression that the floodgates of woe were opened upon our world. {Ibid.}**

May God in His word clarify the pollution that we have been under. What does the Scripture say in relation to this? What position does the law have? What is the role of the Ten Commandments in the water of salvation?

## ***Our Schoolmaster***

**Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.**

A schoolmaster is someone who takes you through punishments because of the things where you are going wrong; he is the one who is disciplining me, bringing me face to face with what I should be doing. And then, when I discover that I have failed so bitterly, when I discover the enormity of my failure, it leads me to Jesus and says to me, Look, there is the One who took this failure. If the church does not preach the law and God's requirements, the soul cannot discover the depths of love required to save him. It is the responsibility of the minister to proclaim the law and the standards of God's word so that people who do not know how to be saved in reality can see their undone condition, can feel the horror of their failure. And as they feel it with all its enormity, they will begin to see the amazing activity of God.

**Only he who sees his own sinfulness can discern the preciousness of the Saviour. {DA 494.4}**

You want to love Jesus? You want to be motivated by a love for Jesus so that you will do God's will? Then look at the law; it will show you what a terrible mess you are in, and you will appreciate the preciousness of the Saviour. Then we will have a dimension of love that is more than poetic love, more than emotional love. It is a love that is deep, stored in the heart; because in the depth of my heart, as I feel so depraved, so hopeless, so sinful, Jesus reaches me.

**2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**

The sin that I feel so deeply because the preacher has been preaching the law and the requirements of God, and he preaches Jesus together with that; as I feel the depth of my sin, I behold Jesus who was made to be the sin that I feel so deeply inside of myself. And as I feel so deeply the sin inside of me, and I behold Jesus, I see Him taking that away from me, and giving me His righteousness.

We are condemned with our sinful condition; God is angry with us, and we can feel the anger of God because of our sinfulness. Depraved, condemned, sinful, I see Jesus *wearing* my own experience.

**He clothed himself in our filthy garments, that we might wear the spotless robe of his righteousness, which was woven in the loom of heaven. {ST, May 30, 1895 par. 4}**

This idea of wearing something is being used very colloquially in the world today. "Here, wear that!" they say, alluding to something terrible that you've been nailed down to with your own corruption. Jesus wore it! He wore my corruption. And as you behold Jesus and you see the depth of your depravity, can

you see the gratefulness that begins to well up from within? “What? He was actually clothing Himself in *my* filthy garments?” I see these filthy garments through the revelation of God’s law and I see myself hopelessly depraved, and I am pleading in the depth of my soul, I am so disgusting! and Jesus is crying in Gethsemane and at the cross with *my* sin. This is where the faith comes in. Do I really believe that Jesus is my *personal* Saviour? This knowledge of Jesus as my personal Saviour makes an impact in my life when I consciously experience His presence.

You are there in the depth of despair, and someone walks in into your presence, your space, and you think, Oh, I’m too terrible; this person is better than me. And as you look, because of your knowledge of Jesus, that presence reveals something to you, and you see Him bearing your horrible guilt, your condition, and He says, But here is My righteousness, My perfection; it’s yours. As you are conscious of His presence, can you see the impact that it makes upon us? This is why this word of His to you and me is expressed:

**Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

## Union

He is referring to the people who are trying to keep God’s law. It is right that they should; but they are labouring and are heavy laden with the burden of trying to reach it and not succeeding; and it makes them feel depraved and hopeless. And Jesus says, I’m here... I want you to come into My presence, because I want to be in your presence. And as we let His presence come to us and we come into His presence, there is an impact; there is something that is going to affect me. He not only says, *Come unto Me*, but also:

**John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.**

So the Jesus who abides in me in my sin, who was made to be sin for me, as in my inmost being I am aware that He is actually abiding in me with my depravity, He says, Now you abide with Me and stay close to Me in My presence with you, and let us abide together; as all this goes on, what effect will this have in our life? Here is the water of life, Jesus the Bread of life. This is what is needed.

**We are to seek for the union of which He speaks when He says, "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). This union is deeper, stronger, truer, than any other union and is productive of all good. {HP 187.3}**

Jesus was made to be sin for us; He became me in my sin. So He was in me, and now He says I am to abide in Him. And in the consciousness of His presence and His righteousness with me in my sin, there is a psychological impact that takes root in our mind, our heart, our affections. I am in His presence, He feels my sin, and He imparts to me His righteousness, His beautiful personality, His holy life. What will that do to me? What is the psychological impact that this will have? It will produce good in me. The true knowledge of His perfection, His perfect righteousness, and the sense of His presence in my space, will have an effect. If I am there in His presence, I cannot do wrong. It's so powerful; it affects my mind. In His presence I cannot do the wrong that I have been struggling with.

**The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you. {SC 64.2}**

Are you drinking? The vivifying influence of the Spirit of God comes upon me as He takes Jesus and shows Him to me. There He is in my presence, with my grotty sinfulness... and now I see that He actually suffered that. And He says, Now I am in your presence; I am not condemning you, I have taken your sin, your grotty experience. As you study Him in Gethsemane and at the cross, you see it. As you now stand so close to Jesus, your ugliness of character and His perfection are standing in broad daylight, and you love Him, because He does not cast you off. He does not cast us off.

**The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; {SC 65.2}**

How does He pardon but by receiving my sin upon Him? I flee to Him because I'm not condemned, because He took it with me; and I stand there in amazement.

**...and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. {Ibid.}**

Now the power of His love, His glory, will be revealed to us.

**The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image. {Ibid.}**

I love the pure water of life. It clears the murky pollutions. You know what it is, when you are by a river and it is brown because all the pollution is running into it, then you come to another stream and it is crystal clear – it's nice to drink from that one. This is what this is about. Are we drinking?

The language of our soul, in the knowledge of the presence of Jesus, will be what follows. This is the attitude that takes root in our life in the presence of His glory and purity; it will affect me to love His law:

**Psalm 119:1 Blessed [are] the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.**

Why are they walking in the law of the Lord? Because Jesus is in their presence.

**Psalm 119:2 Blessed [are] they that keep his testimonies, [and that] seek him with the whole heart. 3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. 4 Thou hast commanded [us] to keep thy precepts diligently.**

This is what God commands us to do, to keep them diligently.

**Psalm 119:5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!**

This is the desire that is generated as we are in the presence of Jesus.

**Psalm 119:6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. 7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.**

What an interesting combination of expressions. *I will keep thy statutes / O forsake me not utterly.* I need Your presence! because when I am in your presence I love to keep Your law. Your will and Your way is just what I want because of your mercy toward me, which I see in Your revelation.

## **Our Relationship to the Issues of Life**

In the knowledge of that presence, look at our relationship with the issues of daily life. I want to ask you several questions, and be very honest in your own heart:

1. Do you crack up under friction? When things are really hard to bear and friction creates a terrible circumstance in the relationships of life, do you crack up?
2. Do we lose our temper under stress?

### 3. Do we become irritated by someone or something that doesn't suit me?

These three points are the problems in our daily life. Am I reflecting Jesus in my life when I crack up, when I lose my temper, and when I become irritated and it comes out through my voice and it irritates other people? All these things are what we are struggling with as Christians. But what will happen if I am in the presence of Jesus and He is abiding in me?

**He invites us to abide with Him. When we do this, when we make our home with Him, all friction, all ill temper, all irritation, will cease. {HP 187.4}**

I have to confess that when I lose my temper, when I become irritated, when I'm cracking up under friction, it is because I have not been abiding with Christ. This is my problem. And every time I fail, I run back into His arms again, and I say, Lord, I have failed you. But when I am in His presence, friction, ill temper, and irritation melt away. It melts away. It does not exist in His presence. And He invites us to abide with Him, in this consciousness of who He is, and the consciousness of my depravity which He wears, the exchange. As I am in that presence and I remain in that presence, friction, ill temper, irritation ceases to exist.

**Isaiah 32:17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.**

There is assurance; there is peace within, in His presence, in the works of *His* righteousness manifest in His life. I am in His presence; it's quietness; there is no friction, no stress. There is perfect acquiescence.

**Christ will be to His people all that these words [Isa. 32:17] express if they will heed the invitation to come to Him. He will be to them life and power, strength and efficiency, wisdom and holiness. God calls upon us to live the Christ life, to reveal this life to the world. {HP 187.2}**

How can I do it if I'm not in His presence? I will only reveal my depravity again. But if I am in His presence, Christ will be revealed; and He invites me, "Do come into My presence. Abide with Me; make your home with Me; stay with Me consciously every moment of the day." This is what I must do to be obedient to all His requirements.

What kind of a tolerance will we exercise to one another when we are in this state with Jesus, abiding with Him?

**...He says, "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). This union is deeper, stronger, truer, than any other union and is productive of all good. Those who are thus united to the Saviour are controlled by His will and are moved**

**by His love to suffer with those who suffer, to rejoice with those who rejoice, to feel a deep sympathy for every one in weakness, sorrow, or distress.**  
 {HP 187.3}

When I see a sister or a brother full of weakness around me and failing miserably, what will come from me if I am in the presence of Christ? I will have sympathy, instead of saying, "What are you doing that for? What aren't you waking up to yourself? How about making a chance in your life??" All those sorts of things we are prone to say to those who are failing miserably around us. But when Jesus is in my presence I will have sympathy for that. As I see my brothers and sisters suffering, what will I do? I will suffer together with them. I will rejoice with those who rejoice. This is how a church will travel along sweetly in the love of God together. There will be no recriminations, no denouncing of another person's failure; there will not be an expression of frustration about someone who isn't doing what I want them to do; nothing at all; because in the presence of Jesus that all melts away. And what are we to do to be like that? You can't do it on your own. We can't do it without the help of Jesus. I must be in His presence. Only then will it happen. I will not respond negatively to anything around me, because I'm right in His presence, He's right there present with me.

The presence of Jesus is the presence of God's law and statutes which are kept before us; because are not the law and God's statutes His character? So Jesus stands with the law in His heart, and that is His character. If I don't like the law, if I don't feel comfortable that the law is in front of me, I can't be saved. It is kept before us to keep us conscious of our undone, sinful condition. By this avenue we discern the preciousness of our Saviour, His atonement with our sin, our guilt, and the blessed sense of pardon and the reception of His righteousness. He wore out guilt and sin so that we might wear His garments of righteousness. This is the sense of His presence:

**Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed." {DA 25.2}**

Are you drinking? And are you going to walk away from this draught from the well of salvation with a determination to stay in the presence of Jesus consciously, not to lose sight of Him for one moment? And if you do lose sight of Him and you fail, flee straight back into His arms again, because that is the only place where you will be comforted.

What a blessed atmosphere we may be surrounded by in the presence of such a one. It is this presence which is spoken of in the following words. What does this produce?

**Titus 2:14 [Christ] gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**

What will they be doing? They will be *zealous of good works*; they will say, Lord, show me all Your statutes; show me all Your will. And we come to church to listen to the beautiful story of redemption, as well as to the instructions and the counsels and the standards, the do's and the don'ts, of God's word, because we want to hear them so I can change my activities, because I love Him.

Let us go to and do just that. This is the water of life – Jesus in my conscious presence, me in His presence, abiding in Him. This is the water of life. May God bless us to take it with us; and don't let any muddy waters disturb this pure, crystal-clear pool.

Amen.