A FOURFOLD SALVATION
Chapter 1
1885-1952

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PREFACE

In 1929 we wrote a booklet entitled "A Threefold Salvation" based upon the instruction we had received during our spiritual infancy. Like most of that early teaching, it was defective because inadequate. As we continued our study of God's Word further light has been granted us on this subject, and it is our hope and prayer that this booklet may be so used that its readers will be led to see that, as we had started at the wrong point, far removed of beginning at the beginning, we commenced almost in the middle, instead of almost from his being threefold, as we now expect to be fourfold. How good is the Lord in vouchsafing us additional light, yet it is now our duty to walk therein, and, as Providence affords us opportunity, to give it out. May the Holy Spirit so graciously guide us that God may be glorified and His people edified.

The subject of Divine salvation has, and is, say, provoked age-long controversy and bitter contentions even among Christians. There is comparatively little agreement even upon this elementary yet vital truth. Some have insisted that salvation is by Divine grace, others have argued that it is by human endeavor. Christians are fairly divided in their minds, and while either side can quote Scripture, yet each party is in error in that it has failed to see that salvation is not one thing but many things, and that God's way must be observed by strictly adhering to what God has revealed in His Word. Some have contended that "something must be done" to obtain God's favor, and that this "something" has varied from the optimum of what that "something must be—baptism, church membership, the performing of good works, holding out faithful to the end, etc. On the other hand, there are those who not only grant that salvation is by grace alone, but who deny that God does any means whatever in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose to save His elect—overlooking the fact that the sacrifice of Christ is the great means!

It is true that the Church of God was blessed with super-creation blessings, being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestinated unto the adoption of children, and nothing could ever alter that grand fact. It is equally true that if sin had never entered the world, none had been the recipient of God's grace, for grace presupposes sin, and God's grace could not be manifested in the exercise and operation of His attributes of mercy, compassion, and longsuffering, the glory supplied with the reprobate, shared in the original offspring of their federal head, and partaken of its fearful curse. "In Adam all die" (1Co.15.22). "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Rom.5.18). The result of this, that all are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts" (Eph.4.18), so that the members of the mystical Body of Christ are by nature children of wrath, even as others are (Eph.2.3).

Even when there is fundamental soundness in their views upon Divine salvation many have sick inadequate and one-sided conceptions that other aspects of this truth, equally important and essential, are often overlooked and tacitly denied. How many, for example, would be capable of giving a satisfactory reply to the question, Is the salvation of the Church the same as that of the world? (2Ti.1.9). Yet there are some who would say that it is. Again, how many are there who believe that God's elect are saved by a mere act of faith, while others contend that God's elect are saved by a mere act of love, and unless we learn to distinguish sharply among them, there can be naught but confusion and cloudiness in our thinking. These passages present three distinct phases and stages of salvation: salvation as an accomplished fact, as a present process, and as a future prospect.

Some have argued that the Divine salvation is a matter of sovereignty, and that God will save whomsoever He will, and that man can do nothing to hinder or help. Others have contended that it is a matter of free will, and that man is free to accept or reject God's offer of salvation, and that God will not force any one against his will. Others have argued that it is a matter of God's sovereignty and man's free will, and that God will save those who of their own free will accept Christ, while others have contended that it is a matter of God's foreknowledge, and that God has predestinated to save those whom He foresaw would of their own free will accept Christ, and that God will not force any one against his will.

"He hath made everything beautiful in his time" (Ecc.3.11), and much of the beauty of God's spiritual handiwork is lost upon us unless we duly observe their "time." Has not the Spirit Himself emphasized this in the express enumeration He has given us in "For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom.8.29-30). Rom.8.29 announces the purpose of God, Rom.8.30 the execution of that purpose. The former was before the world began, the latter is being fulfilled in the present time. Again, we read of those who are "called according to his purpose" (Rom.8.28), and of others who are "called with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Ti.1.9). Here we have a threefold order of God's dealings with His people, the first being according to purpose, the second according to grace, the third according to works. Again, we read of "the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1Pe.1.2). Here we have a threefold order of God's dealings with His people, the first being according to foreknowledge, the second according to sanctification of the Spirit, the third according to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Since the last statement has thrown light upon and explain what we have said in "according to sovereign grace" Preachers who are so fond of quoting Rom.9.16 should be careful to distinguish between God's sovereign and gracious dealings with His elect and their responsibility to be exercised in the later! Christ's sheep are not to be driven, they are to be led. The Holy Spirit does not force the unregenerate to be saved, but He does make them willing in the day of His power (Psa.110.3).