

Saved *versus* Being Saved.

BY REV. T. W. CHAMBERS, D.D.

THERE are three places in the revised version of the New Testament in which the peculiar phrase "being saved" is introduced. The first is Acts ii. 47, where the A. V. reads, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," following Tyndale as he doubtless followed the Vulgate, *qui salvi fierent*. The revisers have corrected this gross error, but instead of saying simply "the saved," read "those that were being saved" as if the term denoted a process going on. The second instance is 1 Cor. i. 18, where instead of the A. V. "unto us which are saved" (*σωζομένοις*), they read "unto us which are being saved"; and the third is 2 Cor. ii. 15, where for the A. V. "them that are saved," we read again "them that are being saved." But they have not carried this change throughout consistently, for in Luke xiii. 23, where the same participle is found, they adhere to the A. V., and read, "Are they few that be saved," not "that are being saved." This shows that it was not the essential grammatical meaning of the participle which led to the changes elsewhere, for if so, the change would have been made here, but the presumed demands of the connection. The only other place in the New Testament where this participle occurs is Rev. xxi. 24, "the nations of the saved," where, however, all the editors since Griesbach have omitted the participle, as indeed they were bound to do, the evidence being overwhelmingly against it. If, however, the contrary had been the case, there seems little reason to doubt that the revisers would have left the A. V. unchanged, for the dwellers in the New Jerusalem are surely "the saved."

The objections to the rendering of the English revisers are, in the first place, that even if it be a correct grammatical form, as many eminent scholars now affirm, it is inelegant and awkward. In the next place, it is not required by fidelity to the original. The passive participle of the present tense in Greek is often, if not generally, used to express a complete action. Instances are:—

Mark i. 10: "he saw the heavens opened" (*σχιζομένους*).

Luke ii. 33: "the things that were spoken" (τοῖς λαλουμένοις). In ii. 18 the aorist is used (τῶν λαλήθεντων), and in i. 45 the perfect (τοῖς λελαλημένοις). All three as to actual meaning being equivalent.

2 Cor. vi. 9: "as chastened and not killed" (ὡς παιδευόμενοι, καὶ μὴ θανατούμενοι).

Heb. x. 15: "them that are sanctified" (τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους).

Heb. vii. 8: "of whom it is witnessed that he liveth" (μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῆ).

Acts xx. 9: "a certain young man fallen into a deep sleep" (καταφερόμενος ὑπνῷ βαθεῖ).

It is not denied that the present passive participle often denotes a continued state or a lengthened process, as in the account of the ancient saints, Heb. xi. 37, "being destitute, afflicted, evil entreated" (ὑστερούμενοι, θλιβύμενοι, κακουχούμενοι). But it is claimed that this is not the habitual or necessary meaning. In any given case the context, or the nature of the subject, must determine the precise signification. In the case of the verb employed in the passages under consideration, σωζω, it is worthy of note that in the Septuagint the present passive participles and the perfect passive are used as precisely equivalent. In Jer. xlii. 17, we read οὐκ ἔσται αὐτῶν οὐθεὶς σωζόμενος, and in xliv. 14, the same idea is expressed by οὐκ ἔσται σεσωσμένος. So in Isaiah xlv. 20, we read οἱ σωζόμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν; and in xlv. 19, in a connexion precisely the same, we have ἐξαποστελῶ ἐξ αὐτῶν σεσωσμένους εἰς κ.τ.λ. In both cases the action is regarded as something done and finished, without respect to the question whether the completion has just taken place or was effected at some previous period.

But the chief objection to the proposed rendering is, that it tends to conceal an important usage of Scripture. It was said many years ago by Bishop Lightfoot, that "in the language of the New Testament salvation is a thing of the past, a thing of the present, and a thing of the future." Now in what way these diverse forms of expression are to be explained and harmonized is a question of dogma, and belongs to theologians, some of whom seem to me in their theories to come near the doctrinal ground of the Tridentine decrees. But the proper translation of these utterances in each case is a question of exegesis, and all that is required is to put the expression of the sacred writer into its exact equivalent in the vernacular. No other course is fair to the original, or to the wants of the intelligent reader who, having the precise language of Scripture before him, may make his own adjustment of the words. The New Testament then, as was said, refers to the salvation of believers as, —

1. *A thing of the Past.* Ephes. ii. 8: "By faith have ye been saved (ἐστε σωσμένοι) through faith." 2 Tim. i. 9: "Who saved us (σώσαντος) and called us with a holy calling." Titus iii. 5: "According to his mercy he saved us (ἔσωσεν) through the washing of regeneration," etc. Of like tenor is the phrase which occurs once in Matthew (ix. 22), twice in Mark (v. 34, x. 52), and four times in Luke (vii. 50, viii. 48, xvii. 19, xviii. 42): "Thy faith hath saved thee" (σέσωκέ σε). In all these cases the salvation referred to is spoken of as complete and finished in this present life. It makes no difference whether the reference is to the work of the Saviour in atonement and intercession, or to the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. In either case the salvation is spoken of as a thing done, actually and fully accomplished.

2. *A thing of the Present.* In 1 Cor. xv. 2 the apostle speaks to his brethren of the gospel as that "by which also ye are saved" (σώζεσθε). In 2 Peter iii. 21 it is said of baptism, "which also after a true likeness doth now save you" (σώζει). Here evidently the conception is of a deliverance which looks neither backward nor forward, but is an object of immediate enjoyment and concern. As a gift, it is bestowed at once; as a result, it follows from present activity in view of the truth. Whatever believers have been in the past, or whatever they may become in the future, they are now in a saved condition. They are not merely salvable, but saved,—a delightful present experience. It is difficult to see how any other meaning can be given to these passages.

3. *A thing of the Future.* Matt. x. 22: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (σωθήσεται). Rom. viii. 24: "For by hope were we saved, but hope that is seen is not hope." 1 Cor. v. 5: "That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Peter i. 5: "Guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." In these and like passages salvation is assigned to the period when Christ shall come the second time without sin. And here of course it must mean the fullest possible sense of the word, as extending to the body as well as the soul, as including inward holiness as well as forensic justification, as putting an end to sin and sorrow, vicissitude and temptation, tears and death. In this sense it is future, an object of faith and hope, and bearing to present experience the same relation that the blaze of noon bears to the first appearance of dawn.

It appears, then, that according to the New Testament we may say of a believer, either that he has been saved, whether by the sacrifice

of Christ or the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, or that he is now saved ; *i.e.*, is in the enjoyment of that great blessing, or that he will be saved in the great day of the new heavens and the new earth. In all these cases the question is viewed on the divine side as the act of God, without any reference to human activity, although we know from other scriptures that man is neither unconscious nor torpid, but in the full exercise of his rational and moral nature when thus saved. The work, therefore, is not a process, but an act, and it effects an instantaneous change in its subject. According to the New Testament, men at any given moment are either saved or lost, no intermediate condition being conceivable any more than we can think of a departed spirit being one half in the place of bliss, and the other half in a place of woe.

It is therefore a misleading translation of *σωζομένους* when it is put "them that are being saved," because it turns a divine act into a process, and thus is at war with the whole tenor of the Greek Scriptures as to the divine side of salvation. Nor is it any answer to this, to appeal to the apostle's direction to the Philippians (ii. 12) : "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," for here the reference is distinctly to the human side of the great blessing. These Philippians were already saved men ; they were eminent believers. But in appropriating and exercising and developing the grace received, there was large room for the most intense activity of body, soul, and spirit. The Philippians were not toiling after something new and remote from their present experience, but after a richer measure of that victory over sin and likeness to Christ in which is the essential characteristic of a saved condition. In this sense every Christian passes through a process from the moment of conversion to the moment of dissolution. But all the time he is a saved man, and there is no process on the divine side of his salvation.

And that this is the meaning in the passages under consideration, that the apostle speaks of Christians as "saved," and not as being in a course which may or may not terminate in salvation, is further confirmed by the contrasted phrase, "them that are lost," not "them that are perishing," as the R. V. puts it (*τοῖς μὲν ἀπολλυμένοις*). For if the gospel ceased to be foolishness, they would not perish, whereas the apostle says that the gospel is to one class folly, to the other wisdom, and therefore producing the two different results in both. So in 2 Cor. ii. 15, where he says that he is a sweet savor of Christ unto God in both the saved and the lost, it is clear that he speaks of a result, and not of a tendency or a process, because he adds, "to the

one a savour from death unto death ; to the other a savour from life unto life." To the same effect he says in iv. 3, that "the gospel is veiled in them that are lost," not "that are perishing" (*ἀπολλυμένοις*). To almost all the gospel is veiled for a time, but the apostle means those from whom the veil is never removed, and such are appropriately described as "them that perish." So again, in 2 Thess. ii. 9, the working of Satan is said to be "with all deceit of unrighteousness in them that perish" (*ἀπολλυμένοις*), whose fearful fate he sets forth in the following verses. These, then, are not simply perishing, but perished. The same thing is true of the two instances in which this participle is applied to inanimate things ; viz., John vi. 27, "the meat which perisheth," and 1 Peter i. 7, "gold that perisheth." What is meant is not that the food and the gold are on the way to perish and may reach that result, but that they actually do perish. They are not only perishable, but in their own nature certain to perish. In both cases the whole point of the comparison lies in this. The meat which Christ gives endures unto everlasting life, and the proof of the Christian's faith is found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ, but the meat of this world and the gold of earth both pass away and disappear forever.

Hence we conclude that the change introduced by the revisers in the three texts quoted was not required by fidelity to the original, and that the American committee were wise in adhering to the language of the authorized version.