

# SEED & BREAD

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BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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### WHAT DOES *SOTERION* MEAN?

The word *soterion* is the Greek word that is translated "salvation" in Acts 28:28. It is of the utmost importance since it is the subject of the sentence that makes up this passage. If we do not know for sure what it means then we can never be certain as to what Paul was saying in this important announcement. If we do not arrive at a faithful translation of this word, we will be guilty of changing the subject and have Paul saying something that he is not. This word does not mean "salvation", as it is translated in the KJV and most other versions. If Paul had been speaking of salvation here he would have used the noun *sateria*, not the adjective *soterion*.

The noun *sateria* is found forty-five times in the New Testament and is translated "salvation" in forty of these occurrences. The adjective *soterion* is found five times as shown in the following concordance:

- \* **Luke 2: 30** For mine eyes have seen thy *salvation*
- \* **Luke 3:6** all flesh shall see the *salvation* of God
- \* **Acts 28:28** the *salvation* of God is sent to the Gentiles
- \* **Eph. 6: 17** And take the helmet of *salvation*
- \* **Tit. 2: 11** the grace of God *that bringeth salvation*

From this list it will be seen that the translators have treated this divinely-inspired adjective as if it were a noun when it is not. This is not a grammatically correct translation, and it robs the reader of the exact truth that the Spirit of God intended to convey by the use of this adjective.

There is no doubt but that this word literally means *saving*, even as we would use it in speaking of "saving grace" or "the saving work of Christ", and it is also clear that in four of the five occurrences in the New Testament

it is substantivized; that is, it is used as if it were a noun. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is an adjective, and there is one fixed rule about adjectives that cannot be altered; they never stand alone. If they seem to stand alone, as they do in the five passages cited above, then the noun which they qualify must be found in the context. More on this later, but first of all we must define this word more accurately. There is no question but that it has a technical meaning and is so used in the New Testament.

*The King James Version* came very near to the true meaning of this word in Titus 2: 11 where it was translated by using three words "that bringeth salvation," for the technical meaning of *soterion* is salvation-bringing. The lexicons are practically unanimous in regard to this:

- \* Abbott-Smith: "saving, bringing salvation."
- \* Cremer: "saving, bringing salvation."
- \* Lidell and Scott: "savings, delivering, bringing safety."
- \* Thayer: "saving, bringing salvation."
- \* Bullinger: "saving, delivering, bringing salvation."
- \* Arndt and Gingrich: "saving, bringing salvation."
- \* W. E. Vine: "saving, bringing salvation."

Moulton and Millegan say that in the papyrus this word is used in the neuter as a substantive with reference to what produces *soteria*, e.g., a sacrifice or a gift.

As stated before, this word is an adjective and no adjective ever stands alone in a sentence. In fact this is so true that one meaning of the word *adjective* is "something that cannot stand alone." In any sentence where it seems to stand alone we must always seek for that which it modifies. In such statements as, "It is beautiful," or "This is good," we have adjectives which appear to stand alone, yet these words say nothing about anything until we find something in the physical context that supplies the subject. If we are gazing at a sunset or eating a meal when these words are spoken they become full of meaning at once.

Adjectives can be used as substantives only when the idea that is being qualified or modified is clear from the context, either written or apparent. Even a sentence like, "The young are impatient," if spoken without context would quickly bring the terse question, "Young what?"

With these facts before us we can now take up the examination of the five passages in which this adjective is found, keeping in mind that it means salvation-bringing.

If this definition is followed out it would mean that Luke 2:30 would read, "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation-bringing." This is evidently not a complete statement and yet it is exactly what Simeon said, as literally as it can be translated. And it is bound to cause the question to be asked, "Salvation-bringing what?" However, this is good, for the question sends us at once to the context to find out what it is that is described as "salvation-bringing."

Moffitt recognizes the adjective here and renders it "thy saving power," as does also Lenski, translating it "thy saving gift." Both of these are linguistically wrong as there is nothing about "power" or "gift" in the context.

Simeon, the one who spoke these words, was an aged man who had been told that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, that is, Jehovah (Luke 2:26). When this man, led by the Spirit of God, came into the temple and saw the infant Jesus he declared to God, the One who before had spoken to him, "**Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation-bringing.**" This is literally what he said, and the context leaves no doubt about the noun that should be supplied. Simeon had seen God's salvation-bringing Messiah (Christ), the world's long awaited Savior. He had seen what God had told him he would see - not power, not a gift, but the Christ.

In the second occurrence of *soterion* (Luke 3:6) the noun that needs to be supplied is not so readily apparent, yet there can be no mistake as to the intent of the Spirit in this place. Literally this passage would read, "And all flesh shall see the salvation-bringing of God." This is grammatically correct, and it is true to the Greek. Yet some will again respectfully inquire: "Salvation-bringing what?" and again the answer must be found in the context. This makes it plain that this statement is in complete harmony with something written in the prophecy of Isaiah, where it says "**And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together**" (Isa. 40: 5 ). In view of this the noun to be supplied is *glory*, making the passage under consideration to read, "And all flesh shall see the salvation-bringing glory of God." The reference here is to world salvation.

The occurrence in Eph. 6:17 belongs to a portion on which so many sermons have been preached that few are now able to distinguish between these and the actual message of God. If this is translated literally it would read, "And receive the helmet of the salvation-bringing, even the sword of the Spirit, which is a declaration of God." Here again we must seek an honest answer to the question, "Salvation-bringing what?"

In this passage "the helmet" equals "the salvation-bringing" for they are appositional - one defines the other. And then by a further apposition these are defined as "the sword of the Spirit" which in turn is described as being "a declaration from God." In view of this we should read here, "And take the helmet of the salvation-bringing declaration (the gospel)." And let it not be thought strange that the salvation-bringing declaration of God is both the believer's helmet and the Spirit's sword. There is no mixing of metaphors here, but two distinct metaphors setting forth two separate uses of the same thing. It is my firm opinion that the salvation-bringing declaration of God is the gospel according to John, the only book in the Bible that was written so that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life through His name (John 20:31). The one who is not securely grounded upon this message will not be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. We need this helmet.

In Titus 2: 11 we do not need to search for the noun which the adjective qualifies as it is in the passage. This passage should read, "For the salvation-bringing grace of God has shone forth in behalf of all humanity."

We will now consider the occurrence in the main passage under consideration, Acts 28:28. If this is translated literally it will read, "**Let it then be known to you that the salvation-bringing of God has been authorized (made freely available) to the nations and they will hear it.**" But again we must ask, "Salvation-bringing what?"

In the context this "salvation-bringing of God" is something that the nations will hear; therefore, it is a divine communication. Thus we should read here, "the salvation-bringing message of God." Some may prefer some other term such as *word*, *utterance*, *declaration* or *gospel*, and there can be no objection to these since they all describe a communication that is intended to be heard. They are somewhat synonymous terms and they can be used for emphasis and variety. Thus it is that we have the subject of Paul's great declaration in Acts 28:28. He is talking about the salvation-bringing

message of God.

The words "has been authorized" declare an accomplished fact, the effect of which continues, so the tense here is the second aorist. The words "they will hear it" declare a future result so the tense is future.

The great change that took place at Acts 28:28 is declared in the words "has been authorized to the nations." It is quite evident from Acts 10:36 and Acts 13:26 that the salvation-bringing message of God was authorized and made freely available to the nation of Israel from the day of Pentecost. At Acts 10 Peter was authorized to proclaim it to one Gentile household, but his commission did not go beyond this. The Apostle Paul was authorized to proclaim it to Gentiles, but it was severely restricted. It had to be to the Jew first in every place that he visited. Thus that which had been freely available only to Israel became freely available to all other nations at Acts 28:28.

In the words "**they will hear it**" we have a pledge and guarantee from God made by His agent and spokesman, Paul. These words actually mean that it will get through to the nations for their benefit. God made good on this pledge when He caused the Gospel of John to be written. The salvation-bringing message is no longer in the hands of men. It is written and it stands written.

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