

GREAT RESOLUTIONS

Program Thirty-Eight

The Truth of Christian Reward Robert Govett – Part Two

Can we as Christians lose our salvation? If we are saved by faith, do works matter? Is salvation a free gift of God, or do we need to work for it? Does it matter how we live and conduct ourselves once we receive the Lord? Will all Christians be raptured at the same time?

These are some of the questions Christians have been asking for centuries. Different and conflicting interpretations of scripture abound, especially those concerning faith vs. works and the Lord's second coming. The truth regarding many of these matters has been lost or has become confused among the Lord's people. How can we sort these things out?

Thankfully the Lord has not left us without the shining of His clear word in the Scriptures. He has also given us prophets and teachers who are skilled in cutting straight the word of the truth (2 Tim. 2:15b). These gifts to the church expound the word of God with revelation and understanding. Today we owe much to those saints from

the past who have faithfully prayed, studied and labored over the word to make clear these truths for our understanding and help in our Christian living.

Just as the principles of electricity were put forth by Benjamin Franklin, Michael Faraday, Nikola Tesla and others, so too, many Biblical principles and truths have been elucidated by saints who have gone before us. Their proper teaching has made it possible for us to be clear concerning important matters such as the security of our salvation, the Lord's second coming, the rapture of the believers, and our accountability for our Christian living.

It is not easy to understand many portions of scripture without some proper interpretation. Ezra the scribe and others helped God's people when they "read in the book, in the law of God, interpreting and giving the sense, so that they understood the reading" (Neh.8:8). The Ethiopian eunuch could not understand the book of Isaiah until Philip explained it to him (Acts 8:29-35), and the Apostle Paul helped us understand the difficult book of Leviticus by giving us his exposition in the book of Hebrews.

Our understanding of Bible truths today is based upon the proper teaching of brothers from the time of the church fathers all the way to today. Those who have ministered and opened the word to us include Martin Luther, the inner life believers, such as William Law and Andrew Murray; Count Nikoulaus Zinzendorf; G. H. Pember; A.B. Simpson;



Robert Govett

and Mary McDonough. Through these and many others we have received much help.

The truths about the Lord's return, the rapture of the believers, and the coming kingdom were recovered in part by John Nelson Darby, Benjamin Wills Newton and other brethren teachers. But according to Witness Lee, "the best presentation of these matters was made clear through brothers such as Robert Govett and D. M. Panton." Brother Lee said, "When Brother Nee was young, he was helped a great deal by reading the books of Pember, Govett, and Panton." Let us take a look into some of the matters rightly unfolded in their writings.

The Gift of Salvation and the Prize as a Reward

It is most wonderful that we, as believers in Christ, are saved and saved forever. We have been chosen and predestinated by God in eternity past to be saved once for all (Eph. 1:4-5). The French reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) is well-known for stressing this truth, sometimes referred to as the doctrine of predestination.

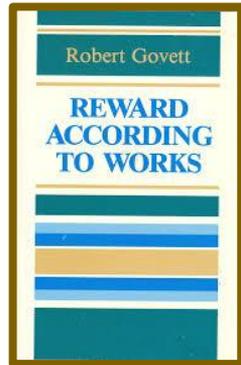
Not all agreed with Calvin. Some argued that if we do not fulfill our responsibilities after being saved, we will lose our salvation. According to this false understanding, our salvation is not secure; it can come and go: Christians can be saved, sin, repent, and be saved again. Some people have called this an "elevator salvation."

Adherents to both viewpoints back up their beliefs with scriptures. So, what is the truth? What is the proper and balanced teaching concerning this matter? We owe much to Robert Govett and his student D. M. Panton for making these truths clear. They saw that once a person is saved he is saved forever; he will never perish, or suffer eternal damnation (John 10:28). Govett affirmed that the gift of

eternal life is “something bestowed without price (Rom. 6:23),” and that eternal life is “bestowed on God’s elect at once upon their faith, and cannot be lost.” This was not earned, since it is not by works in righteousness which we did, but according to His mercy He saved us (Titus 3:5).

These matters get confusing, however, when believers read scriptures that speak of suffering loss (1 Cor. 3:15), and of being punished by being appointed a place with the hypocrites where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:51), or of being cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:30).

Govett explained that these verses are not speaking of perishing or of losing our salvation, but of suffering the loss of a prize in the future, which will be a reward to faithful believers. Although it is true that we are saved forever, and that our salvation is eternally secure, we cannot deny that the Bible speaks of reward and punishment in relation to believers. On one hand we have the gift of God, eternal life, that we are presently enjoying. On the other hand, like Paul, we are seeking, and have not yet attained, a prize as a reward of our high calling (Phil. 3:10-14).



Robert Govett taught that a prize is “a reward gained by some performance.” This is the prize of which Paul spoke of, and that we should press toward in order to attain. This is the prize or reward of being a partaker of the best or first resurrection in order to participate in the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:4-5). This reward is given to those who have served the Lord, who have suffered for the Lord’s sake, and who did the will of the Father (Matt.

25:21-23; 1 Cor. 3:8, 10, 14). According to Govett's proper teaching, not all believers will enter the kingdom of the heavens, the thousand-year kingdom, when the Lord returns. Only the overcomers will be kings with Christ in the millennium. This kingship in the coming age will be a reward to the overcoming ones.

In Revelation 22:12 the Lord says, "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to reward each one according to his work." This is one of the verses Govett used to present the principle that although the redeemed are *saved* by faith in the perfect work of Christ, they are *rewarded* based on their service or work. Thus, the apostle Paul could proclaim, "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8)."

Salvation is a matter of life, while reward is a matter of living.

Govett's profound writings show that salvation is a matter of life, while reward is a matter of living. He encouraged believers to be faithful and diligent in following, living, and serving the Lord, since if we are not, we will be excluded from the reward of reigning in the millennial.

Although we cannot lose our salvation and perish, it is possible to suffer some punishment during the millennial kingdom. This is the proper teaching of the kingdom brought forth by Govett and Pantton. If we are not faithful, we will not be able to enter the kingdom of the heavens, but we will suffer loss. We should take heed how we serve and build in our Christian life. If we build with gold, silver, and precious stones we will be rewarded, in addition to

salvation. But if we build with wood, grass, and stubble, we will suffer loss (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

The Second Coming and the Rapture

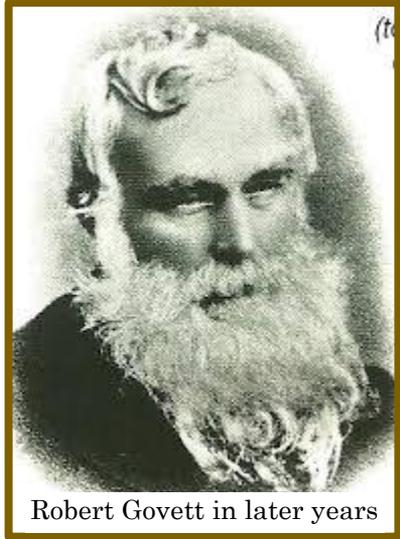
Govett also helped the believers know the truth concerning the Lord's coming back. He did not side with the teachers who argued saying either the Christ would return before the tribulation (pre-tribulation school), or that He would come after the tribulation (post-tribulation school). Govett saw that there were two aspects of Christ's coming—the secret, private aspect, and the open, public aspect. He had what has been called a “partial rapture” view, teaching that some of the saints will be raptured before the tribulation and others after the tribulation. He said that only those who were overcoming and faithful would be raptured before the tribulation, but the majority would be raptured later, after having passed through at least some of the tribulation in order to bring them to maturity.

Appreciation of our Heritage

Sister M. E. Barber was responsible for laying much of the foundation of Watchman Nee's spiritual life. “Brother Nee would tell people that it was through a sister that he got saved, and it was also through a sister that he was edified.” Sister Barber introduced Brother Nee to the best spiritual books, including those by Robert Govett and D. M. Panton. Witness Lee, as a close follower of Brother Nee, also received much help from these authors. He noted that, “today in the Recovery Version of the New Testament, the notes related to the prophecies are extracts obtained through my study of the writings of Darby, Pember, Govett, Panton, and Brother Nee.” He noted that references

concerning “the biblical prophecies have a solid foundation; it did not come out of our own imagination, nor is it our original, unique creation. Rather, what we see is an advancement that we made by standing on the shoulders of those who were before us.”

Witness Lee said, “In the matter of truth we have received a great deal of help from the Brethren—in particular, concerning the interpretation of prophecies. G. H. Pember, Robert Govett, and D. M. Panton were very thorough and precise in their studies, always interpreting the Bible according to the accurate meaning of the words. Hardly any mistakes can be found in their works. Based on their interpretations, and standing on their shoulders, we have examined and pursued the truth and have gone on to see deeper things.”



Robert Govett in later years

Robert Govett’s teachings have been a great help to both Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, and today have become a rich inheritance for us. Thank the Lord for these useful vessels who rightly divided the word of the truth!

Marty Robert and Bill Lawson

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