

# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

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# **The Meaning of Salvation**

**By**

**Charles Ewing Brown**

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Books By The Same Author

The Hope of His Coming  
A New Approach to Christian Unity  
The Church beyond Division  
The Way of Prayer  
The Way of Faith  
Modern Religious Faiths



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## Back Cover

We, too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Clement of Rome (First Century)

\* \* \* \* \*

As a burnished mirror, so ought man to have his soul pure. When there is rust on the mirror, it is not possible that a man's face be seen in the mirror; so also when there is sin in a man, such a man cannot behold God. Do you, therefore, show me yourself, whether you are an adulterer, or a fornicator, or a thief, or a robber, or a purloiner; whether you do not corrupt boys; whether you are not insolent, or a slanderer, or passionate, or envious, or proud, or supercilious; whether you are not a brawler, or covetous, or disobedient to parents; and whether you do not sell your children; for to those who do these things God is not manifest, unless they have first cleansed themselves from all impurity. All these things, then, involve you in darkness, as when a filmy defluxion on the eyes prevents one from beholding the light of the sun: thus also do iniquities, O man, involve you in darkness, so that you cannot see God.

Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (Second Century)

\* \* \* \* \*

I offer unto thee, O Lord, all my sins and offenses, which I have committed before thee, and thy holy angels, from the day wherein I first could sin, to this hour, upon thy merciful altar, that thou mayest consume and burn them all with the fire of thy love, and wash out all the stains of my sins, and cleanse my conscience from all offenses, and restore to me again thy grace which I lost by sin, forgiving me all my offenses, and receiving me mercifully to the kiss of peace.

Thomas a Kempis, in *The Imitation of Christ* (Fifteenth Century)

\* \* \* \* \*

I am sure there is a common Spirit that plays within us, yet makes no part of us; and that is, the Spirit of God, the fire and scintillation of that noble and mighty Essence, which is the life and radical heat of Spirits, and those essences that know not the virtue of the Sun; a fire quite contrary to the fire of Hell. This is that gentle heat that brooded on the waters, and in six days hatched the World; this is that irradiation that dispels the mists of Hell, the clouds of horror, fear, sorrow, despair; and preserves the region of the mind in serenity. Whosoever feels not the warm gale and gentle ventilation of this Spirit, though I feel his pulse, I dare not say he lives: for truly, without this, to me there is no heat under the Tropics; nor any light, though I dwelt in the body of the Sun.

Thomas Browne, in *Religio Medici* (Seventeenth Century)

\* \* \* \* \*

Then were their fetters broken to pieces before their faces, and cast into the air, and their steps were enlarged under them. Then they fell at the feet of the Prince, kissed them, and wetted them with tears; they also cried out with a mighty strong

voice, saying, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from this place!" So they were bid rise up, and go to the town and tell Mansoul what the Prince had done. He commanded also, that one with pipe and taber should go and play before them all the way into the town of Mansoul. Then was fulfilled, what they never looked for, and they were made to possess what they never dreamed of.

Bunyan's Holy War (Seventeenth Century)

\* \* \* \* \*

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process.... by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.

William James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Twentieth Century)

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## Dedication

To the sacred memory of my mother, Georgiana Martin Brown, of my father, Willis McMican Brown, and of my infant sister, Frances; and to my brothers, Anderson and George: your faces Which I studied so intently years ago In the evening firelight Now smile on me In the red glow of Every setting sun.



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## Preface

Clement of Alexandria found difficulty in writing upon the truths of Christianity in the second century. "This discourse respecting God," he writes, "is most difficult to handle. For since the first principle of everything is difficult to find out, the absolutely first and oldest principle, which is the cause of all other things being and having been, is difficult to exhibit." [1] Elsewhere he apologizes to the Christians of his time for trying to explain the mysteries of the Christian religion. Nevertheless, he thinks his readers will profit by taking some pains to seek out the deeper things of God: "As, then, he who is fond of hunting captures the game after seeking, tracking, scenting, hunting it down with dogs; so truth, when sought and got with toil, appears a delicious thing." [2]

How to make the great truths of the Christian religion both simple and attractive is a task which has burdened the mind and well-nigh broken the heart of generations of Christian teachers. Many Christians have formed an ironclad, dogmatic idea that the gospel and all Christian teaching is so simple that all earnest attempts to give it fresh and deeper interpretation in the light of our own time is nothing but a display of worldly wisdom and a vain effort to confuse that which is already crystal clear.

This is a fallacy. The difference between the casual reading of the Bible and the serious study of its doctrinal truths might be illustrated by the difference between the earth and geology. Apparently the earth is a very simple thing. The trees and the wheat fields hold no mysteries for the birds, and the earth of nature may be known very thoroughly with but very little understanding of its meaning. The Indians knew the physical earth perhaps more completely and in greater detail than any scientific geologist has ever known it, yet the Indian did not understand the earth; and as a consequence he walked over vast treasures of oil, coal, diamonds, and gold without ever surmising their hidden existence. Now, without knowing the surface of the earth as minutely as the Indian did, the geologist is able to find much of its hidden treasure because he has studied the earth scientifically, or theoretically, if you will, and he has progressed in understanding it so that he knows how to find its treasures.

The same thing is true of the Bible. Millions of simple-hearted Christians have read the Bible for ages and to none of them has it done any harm -- in fact, as the earth yielded life -- giving food to the Indians, so the Bible read earnestly by the humblest minds yields subsistence for the soul. Nevertheless, I earnestly believe that a systematic, prolonged, and discerning study of the Bible will yield a constantly deepening understanding of its great truths so that its immense treasures will be gathered bountifully by the earnest seeker after truth.

In presenting this study of the meaning of salvation I have sought to make a popular presentation, free from unnecessary technicalities of the schools. Nevertheless, I have thought it necessary to re-examine many of the fundamental doctrines of the faith and present them afresh in the language of our own day. Therefore, since it would be somewhat of a waste of time merely to rehash popular religious ideas, I have felt it necessary to put old truths in such a new setting as will enable the reader to enjoy them from a fresh viewpoint. In doing this I beg the reader to remember that I have pursued these studies with pious regard for the traditions of the Christian church. I have made no effort to originate some novelty in Christian teaching. The whole object in presenting this work has been to deepen the understanding of old truths.

I believe that no one can write intelligently upon this subject without taking the age-long thought of the church into account. People who imagine that they do, simply deceive themselves; for to interpret theology or philosophy without looking through the lens of history is as impossible as it is to look out upon the natural world around us without looking through the lens of one's eye. The great Christian scholars of our own age have, as it were, furnished us a telescope of historic inquiry which has enabled us to get closer to the real teaching and practice of the men who wrote the New Testament. And we should gladly avail ourselves of their labors.



Doubtless there is no interpretation of the gospel possible in this age without wearing one of several pairs of spectacles. One of these pairs is that of Augustine as modified by Calvin and Luther. Another is that of Arius as modified by Socinus. Some wear the spectacles of Darwin and Herbert Spencer. Others wear those of James Arminius as modified by John Wesley. I believe that John Wesley has, generally speaking, interpreted the gospel in such a way as may be construed agreeably with all the facts of modern science concerning the present world and the findings of historical research regarding the ancient church. An especial virtue of Wesley's doctrine is the fact that it has proved to be extremely congenial to revival efforts. It is the only modern Christian doctrine harmonious both with science and with the great evangelical revivals. A person can believe this teaching without insulting his intelligence and he can preach this doctrine with such passion and power as, under the blessings of God, to promote the utmost in revival power and personal spiritual development. This is a very potent reason for believing that in the matter of the doctrine of salvation John Wesley recovered the pure truth of the New Testament church in general, though not in detail.

I have not attempted an exhaustive treatise on the subjects considered, although I have at times given numerous citations from the Scriptures. Those who desire to make thorough systematic studies of these subjects are directed to the classical authorities, such as Wesley's Sermons, Fletcher's Checks to Antinomianism, Watson's Institutes, and the theological works of W. B. Pope, H. Orton Wiley, and J. Agar Beet.

Frankly, I have made no effort to prove these things to those who dogmatically deny them. Spiritual truth is seldom gained by fighting, although it might be lost by that method. Writing casually from memory, I cannot recall many instances where men have had their religious views changed by systematic debate. Origen was perhaps most successful in that work.

The writer is like a householder living at a crossroads: if a stranger asks the way the householder gives his best advice. If, then, the stranger begins to argue the householder will be nonplused; he will not know how to argue with a man who insists that the road runs in a direction contrary to that which the householder knows that it runs.

The theme of this book is the exposition of the Christian and scriptural doctrine of salvation as deliverance from the guilt of sin and the necessity of daily sinning.

In the present volume the writer seeks to prove that man is a contradiction in himself, that he has capacities for misery above all other creatures, and that he constantly torments himself and his kind. This misery arises because he is a misfit in nature. He is out of adjustment with nature because he is out of harmony with God, which is the meaning of sin. The basis of restoring that harmony is the atonement of Christ, and this atonement is brought to all men in some sense by the grace of God as a free gift. If this gift is accepted the soul is saved from the guilt of sin and endued with the principle of life. This life of the Spirit is strong enough to enable the believer to live above sin. The salvation of the body from all the consequences of sin is set forth. The possibility of apostasy is then discussed. Lastly, the young convert is told how to maintain fellowship with God. This all leads up to entire sanctification, to be explained in a forthcoming volume: *The Meaning of Sanctification*.

If this book will serve for a few years as a signboard, pointing the way to the Eternal Jerusalem, that will be reward enough.

Yours in Christian service,  
Charles Ewing Brown,  
Editor in Chief  
Gospel Trumpet Company

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1 Clement, The Stromata, Book V, chap. 12

2 Ibid., Book I, chap. 2



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## Chapter 1

### THE NEED OF SALVATION

Trouble has been the lot of man from the earliest times. He shivers in winter's blasts and is smitten by the summer's heat. His frame is withered by sickness and worn by toil and anxiety.

Famine dogs his steps and the wild, red eyes of war stare at him through the darkness of fear and uncertainty. Evil and short are his days, and death relentlessly trails him with the gloom of nameless fears of the night that will follow earth's early sunset.

Once a boy held a conch [conch = a thick heavy spiral seashell] to his ear to hear what was said to be the roar of a distant sea. Most of the great literature of the world is such a conch in which one hears the never-ending moan of the troubled sea of human misery. "Man," writes Job, "is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).

It is not necessary to agree with the philosophy of Schopenhauer to admit that he has painted a striking, if one-sided, view of human life when he says: "Let us now add the consideration of the human race. Here also life presents itself by no means as a gift for enjoyment, but as a task, drudgery to be performed; and in accordance with this we see, in great and small, universal need, ceaseless wars, cares, constant pressure, endless strife, compulsory activity, with extreme exertion of all the powers of mind and body. Many millions, united into nations, strive for the common good, each individual on account of his own; but many thousands fall as a sacrifice for it. Now senseless delusion, now intriguing politics, excite them to wars with each other; then the sweat and the blood of the great multitude must flow, to carry out the ideas of individuals, or to expiate their faults. In peace, industry and trade are active, inventions work miracles, delicacies are called from all ends of the world, the waves engulf thousands. All strive, some planning, some acting; the tumult is indescribable. But the ultimate aim of it all -- what is it? To sustain ephemeral and tormented individuals through a short span of life, in the most fortunate case with endurable want and comparative freedom from pain, which, however, is at once attended with ennui; then the reproduction of this race and its striving. In this evident disproportion between the trouble and the reward, the will to live appears to us from this point of view, if taken objectively, as a fool, or subjectively, as a delusion, seized by which everything living works with the utmost exertion of its strength, for something that is of no value." <sup>[3]</sup>

It was the remark of Josiah Royce that Schopenhauer only re-echoed the pessimism of Thomas a Kempis' famous Christian classic *The Imitation of Christ*. <sup>[4]</sup> Accordingly we find Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) writing as follows:

"Ah! fool, why dost thou think to live long, when thou canst not promise to thyself one day?

"How many have been deceived and suddenly snatched away!

"How often dost thou hear these reports: Such a man is slain, another man is drowned, a third breaks his neck with a fall from some high place, this man died eating, and that man playing!

"One perished by fire, another by the sword, another of the plague, another was slain by thieves. Thus death is the end of all, and man's life suddenly passeth away like a shadow." <sup>[5]</sup>



It was to be expected that John Milton (1608-1674), greatest religious poet who ever used the English language, should describe human misery with powerful effect. After Adam's fall, the angel Michael shows him in vision the future fate of mankind, and as he gazes with saddened eyes his angelic guide describes the gloomy scene.

"Death thou hast seen In his first shape on Man; but many shapes Of Death, and many are the ways that lead To his grim cave -- dismal, yet to sense More terrible at the entrance than within. Some, as thou saw'st, by violent stroke shall die, By fire, flood, famine; by intemperance more In meats and drinks, which on the Earth shall bring Diseases dire, of which a monstrous crew Before thee shall appear, that thou may'st know What misery the inabstinence of Eve Shall bring on men." Immediately a place Before his eyes appeared, sad, noisome, dark; A lazar house it seemed' wherein were laid Numbers of all diseased maladies Of ghastly spasm, of racking torture, qualms Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds, Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs, Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs, Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy, And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy, Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence, Dropsies and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums. Dire was the tossing, deep the groans; Despair Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch; And over them triumphant Death his dart Shook, but delayed to strike, though oft invoked With vows, as their chief good and final hope. Sight so deform what heart of rock could long Dry-eyed behold? <sup>[6]</sup>

We might change the figure and say that this misery of mankind is the deep slough of despond in which the great seventeenth-century English writer, John Bunyan, struggled so long. In his *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan writes: "Wherefore Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone; but still he endeavored to struggle to that side of the Slough that was still further from his own house, and next to the Wicket-gate; the which he did, but could not get out, because of the Burden that was upon his back: But I beheld in my Dream, that a man came to him, whose name was Help, and asked him, What he did there?" <sup>[7]</sup>

It is from this dismal swamp that Paul heard the age-long cry of distress which forever clamors for deliverance. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:19, 22, A.R.V.).

## PROBLEM OF HUMAN SUFFERING

Paul sees religion as an answer to man's pathetic cry for help in the midst of his suffering and anxiety, and observation confirms the statement that all religion of which history gives us any record whatever is an attempt to answer the cry of distress which arises from the vast swamp of human misery.

Buddhism arose in this way. Buddha Gautama, so the story goes, was a prince of India, living a life of luxury surrounded with all that could gratify sensuality and please the natural man; and yet in this condition he found himself unhappy. Moreover, he was smitten with compunction as he regarded the accumulated misery of the world around him.

It is a dramatic story which tells how he left all his earthly glory behind and, walking softly lest he waken the sleeping dancing girls, fled the palace and went out to be a homeless ascetic devoting every waking hour of the day to the contemplation of the mystery of human suffering. Thus was Buddhism born, and a little reflection will convince any man that all philosophy and all religion, regardless of origin, exist in history for the purpose of furnishing a satisfactory solution of the problem of misery and human suffering.

### What Is the Nature of Man's Misery?

Nearly all historic interpretations of the problem of human suffering have been rendered futile and misleading by reason of the fact that they have been oversimplified. The brilliant thinkers of the world feel happy when they can gather all the threads of a difficult subject into one compact cord -- when they can explain all the complex phenomena of human life by one simple formula. And so the meaning of man's misery has been oversimplified.

In his book, *The Idea of the Holy*, a deep and searching inquiry into the foundations of religious feeling in human nature, Rudolph Otto has shown that the very first effort which mankind made in history to understand the meaning of life was an attempt to attribute all suffering and all misfortune to an incomprehensible, fearful mystery which later men called God.



At the beginning, good and evil were not differentiated in this mystery, but were considered as the source of both the sin and the suffering as well as the goodness and the joy of human life.

The earliest Hindu literature gives us pictures of the gods as being the source of human misery. In the Bhagavad-Gita, one of the scriptures of Hinduism, dating from the third century or earlier, is a passage boldly attributing the sufferings of humanity to the incomprehensible will of God. In the story, Prince Arjuna is being served by the supreme god, Vishnu, incarnated as Krishna, disguised as a charioteer. Suddenly the humble charioteer throws off all camouflage and reveals himself with blazing brilliance as the highest god before the wondering eyes of the prince, who chants:

Thou Refuge of the World!  
Lo! to the cavern hurled  
Of Thy wide-opened throat, and lips white-tushed,

I see our noblest ones,  
Great Dhritarashtra's sons,  
Bhishma, Drona, and Karna, caught and crushed!  
The Kings and Chiefs drawn in,  
That gaping gorge within;  
The best of all both armies torn and riven!  
Between Thy jaws they lie  
Mangled fell bloodily,  
Ground into dust and death!  
Like streams down driven

With helpless haste, which go  
In headlong furious flow  
Straight to the gulping maw of the unfilled ocean,  
So to that flaming cave  
These heroes great and brave  
Pour, in unending streams, with helpless motion!

Like moths which in the night  
Flutter towards a light,  
Drawn to their fiery doom, flying and dying,  
So to their death still throng,  
Blind, dazzled, borne along  
Ceaselessly, all these multitudes, wild flying!

Thou, that has fashioned men,  
Devourest them again,  
One with another, great and small, alike!  
The creatures whom Thou makest,  
With fining jaws Thou takest,  
Lapping them up! Lord God! Thy terrors strike.

At sight of this dreadful mystery, Prince Arjuna raises again the eternal question which philosophy and religion have long tried to answer:

From end to end of earth  
Filling life full, from birth  
To death, with deadly, burning, lurid dread!  
Ah, Vishnu! Make me know  
Why is Thy visage so?

Who art Thou, feasting thus upon Thy dead?

O Mightiest Lord! rehearse

Why hast Thou face so fierce?

Whence did this aspect horrible proceed? <sup>[8]</sup>

The answer of the Bhagavad-Gita remains still one of the classical attempts to solve the problem of human misery: man is a victim of the inexplicable and incomprehensible movement of the will of God. Strange as it may seem, this was substantially the doctrine of Augustine and Calvin. In Christianity this belief is called predestination, and in secular language it is termed fate.

At the same time it must be born in mind that this is likewise the essential answer of scientific materialism, namely, man suffers as he does through the operation of nature, which acts blindly and remorselessly without intelligence and without heart. We believe the solution is too simple, as is also the theory of Buddhism and of Schopenhauer that misery springs from desire.

There are many Christians who believe that man's misery arises from the fact that he is now living in a world resting under a permanent curse from God. This would not be an unreasonable belief for a devout Hindu worshipping Kali, the goddess of fury, or Vishnu who grinds the skulls of earth's noblest heroes between his teeth; but it is not an easy doctrine for a Christian to defend.

The doctrine is based upon the story of the curse pronounced against Adam: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field" (Gen. 3:17-18).

I do not deny that the ground was cursed for Adam's sake. That was a temporary sentence upon him personally, for it specifically identifies him as the one to suffer the penalty. But those who claim that this is the devil's world and that the earth and nature are resting under the curse of God must have neglected reading the following verses: "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:21-22).

An abnormal Christian asceticism has throughout many weary centuries unnecessarily embittered the lives of good people by confusing the world of nature which God pronounced good with the world of moral evil which Christians must forever fight. That God pronounced the earth good when he made it is plainly a part of the record: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Indeed, there is a sense in which all nature is holy, for a holy thing is a thing which God owns, and "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1; I Cor. 10:26-28).

Of course, we do not mean by this that the earth and nature are holy in the moral and spiritual sense of a purified Christian soul, for obviously nature is not capable of any such purity, being without will or any spiritual quality. We simply mean that the earth is holy in the scriptural sense that things that belong to God are holy. It is not too much to say that all attempts to account for man's misery and sin by reference to the supposedly uncongenial nature of his physical environment in this world are a reflection upon the infinite wisdom and goodness that placed man in the midst of a world best adapted to minister to his happiness as planned and built by the infinite wisdom of God. Many years ago that vigorous evangelist Sam Jones poured contempt upon whining Christians who sing: This world's a howling wilderness of woe, This world is not my home.

"You old hypocrites, you," cried the fiery orator, "if there is any howling you are the ones who are doing it; but this world is not a wilderness of woe: this is God's world."

The most pronounced religious conservative must concede that modern research has proved one phase of liberalistic optimism, namely, that the control of nature as revealed by science is placing in man's hands almost infinite possibilities of progress and happiness. Through science man is entering into an age when it seems not unreasonable to hope for the cure of all diseases, or at least an antidote to all pain and suffering which human nature is called upon to endure.



Looking at the surface of things it seems perfectly feasible that we should within one generation become able to feed adequately, clothe comfortably, and house in a sanitary manner every human being in the world; furnish suitable employment to every adult on earth, and cure all diseases. We ought to be able soon to control heredity so skillfully that no more inherited diseases and deformities will be transmitted to posterity; in so doing we should eliminate insanity, feeble-mindedness, and all types of crime which arise from inherited handicaps. We should be able to secure justice for every man and education for every child and youth. Sickness, war, and crime would be eliminated. In this way we could easily build a world which would hold no jails, no hospitals, no insane asylums, and which supported no navies and no armies. Some might think this is a flight of fancy, but I believe that every first-rate scientist in the world will agree that these utopian gains are easily within the scope of man's scientific and inventive grasp at the present time -- if it were not for the contradictory intractable quality of human nature itself. Therefore, sadly, like Adam of old, we are driven away by a flaming sword from this scientific paradise of the future -- driven away, however, not by the evil quality of the physical universe but by the impossibility of ordering the world of mankind into any such rational pattern of life.

#### THE SPRINGS OF MAN'S MISERY ARE IN HIMSELF

While we admit that the world of physical nature has been a hard school -- it has goaded man with heat and with cold and burdened him with toilsome labor -- yet we deny that his misery springs from the physical nature of the world. For us there is good doctrine in the old English folk song:

"I am Myself, My Own Fever and Pain."

The paradox inevitable in all thinking about the mental, moral, and spiritual nature of man has been well expressed by Dr. Harold Rugg as follows:

Every man is a deep dichotomy ... he is Two Men  
In every man there is authoritarian ... democrat,  
pragmatist ... and poet, exploiter ... and sustainer-of-the-yield.  
there is a pride of Self . . . and a sense of neighbor

-- a practical opportunism... and an adamant idealism.  
there is the aggrandizing I ... and the balancing We.

But to make these two men one --  
That is the eternal problem.  
Because of this split in Every man,  
Every Mediterranean culture is a corresponding dichotomy.  
Within each one two rival traditions contend for supremacy:  
-- The Exploitive Tradition of the Individualist.  
-- The Great Tradition of the Person. <sup>[9]</sup>

One of the most able modern exponents of this interpretation of human nature is Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr, of Union Theological Seminary, New York City. Dr. Niebuhr has expounded this Christian interpretation of human nature in two scholarly volumes: *The Nature and Destiny of Man: Vol. I, Human Nature*; and *Vol. II, Human Destiny*. It would be beyond the scope of this book to specify the many points in which I disagree with Dr. Niebuhr, but as against scientific materialism and liberal modernism, I am free to say that Dr. Niebuhr has written the most brilliant and discriminating analysis of human nature to appear in America in many years. Nevertheless he is merely, along with many other able modern thinkers, returning to the traditional Christian doctrine of the nature of man. He is writing in the tradition of Martin Luther, Blaise Pascal, Augustine, and Paul. These have all focused attention upon the double and contradictory quality of human nature. The best and simplest explanation of this standing contradiction in man's life which I have seen is given by Prof. Karl Heim, of the University of Tubingen, in his great book, *God Transcendent, Foundation for a Christian Metaphysic*. The idea is worked out on many pages, but is brought to a focus in the following illustration:

"Two straight lines of infinite length and of different directions intersect in a point. Two infinite planes, inclined at an



angle to each other, intersect in a straight line. The result presented by this intersection of two infinite magnitudes can be described only paradoxically. The point of intersection O, in which two straight lines, AB and CD meet, belongs to the line AB and also to the line CD. But the remarkable thing is that the two lines do not divide this point between them nor compete for the possession of it. The point O belongs wholly and completely to the line AB, and it belongs also wholly and completely to the line CD. The same is true of the line of intersection between two planes. It belongs as much to the one as to the other." <sup>[10]</sup>

To summarize the illustration, we might imagine the horizontal line representing nature, matter, science, and time, the nature of the physical elements of man. Then intersect this at right angles by a vertical line representing mind, thought, spirit, conscience, and eternity. And at the point where these two lines intersect there is generated the strange, perverse, self-contradictory, and restless nature of man. He does not belong wholly to either world alone, and yet there are times when he may imagine himself belonging wholly to either one or the other of these worlds.

At the time when he thinks of himself as an animal he resents the tantalizing and disturbing thought that he is a spirit. And sometimes when he dwells in thought upon the buoyant and unconquerable nature of his spirit, he resents the fact that he is an animal, and seeks to deny it.

It is a strange fact that nearly all philosophy is strenuously engaged in the heartbreaking task of bending these two lines to make them come together into one. Materialism and naturalism seek to bend the vertical line of spirit down to the level of the horizontal line of matter and nature. Students who are drilled in this fantastic exercise for eight or ten years sometimes become so maimed and deformed in their thinking that they cannot any longer conceive and understand the spiritual quality of man's nature.

Philosophical idealism, on the other hand, is engaged in bending the horizontal line of matter and nature to a complete parallel and identification with the vertical line of mind and spirit, thus tending to deny the reality of nature and of matter. This also produces an artificial abnormality in human thinking which tends to make the reception of the truth impossible. Advocates of each of these philosophies stigmatize the Christian view as dualism. Nevertheless, the view which we advocate is not dualism, properly speaking, because dualism implies the existence of two parallel lines running side by side, and that is the very theory of the universe which we deny. We deny that God and spirit run side by side with nature and matter. We assert that God and spirit cross nature and matter just as the vertical line crosses the horizontal line, and yet one does not destroy the other.

I have emphasized this idea because once this viewpoint is gained the student will be amazed at the way in which his conception of the nature of man is clarified and made to correspond with reality. He will discover, that while scientists are correct in describing the physical and animal nature of man, at every point the description falls short of the real man because that can only be understood by a recognition and appreciation of his spiritual capacities. One must understand the way in which this creature of time partakes of the august quality of eternity. And here, too, the inquirer finds himself thinking in the pattern of Holy Scripture, which says: "He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end" (Eccles. 3:11, A.R.V.).

This stereoscopic vision of human nature is the truest and best because it sees man as a creature of two worlds and thus is able to describe him in a manner truly scientific, in a perfectly proper meaning of that word. Even worldly men of genius have been able to see this truth when not blinded by dogmatism. Shakespeare has expressed it thus:

"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?" <sup>[11]</sup>

This is man as the greatest English poet saw him, now like an animal, now like God.

It has been 2,900 years since that famous Greek man of genius, Homer, explained how man's spiritual nature may be hypnotized into a stupor which leaves him predominately an animal. Homer illustrated this by the myth of the sorceress



Circe who, when the sailors of Ulysses had gorged themselves with feasting and with wine, touched them one by one with her wand and turned them into swine:

" ... then instantly she touched them with a wand, and shut them up in sties, transformed to swine in head and voice, bristles and shape, though still the human mind remained to them." <sup>[12]</sup>

We might say that the sorcery of Circe and the genius of Homer made these men miserable by an illuminating revelation of their true condition so that they saw, as never before, that they were animals in a pigsty, yet gifted with the lofty intelligence of the human mind which saw clearly their condition but felt itself utterly unable to escape from its animal limitations.

"The one party is brought back to the other in an endless circle," says Pascal, the great seventeenth century French philosopher, "it being certain that in proportion as men possess light they discover both the greatness and the wretchedness of man. In a word, man knows that he is wretched. He is therefore wretched because he is so, but he is really great because he knows it."

Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;  
Still by himself abused and disabused;  
Created half to rise, and half to fall;  
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled;  
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world! <sup>[13]</sup>

And thus we have seen that man is a bundle of contradictions, miserable and creating misery. Let us go on to see why it is so.

#### WHY MAN IS A MISFIT IN NATURE

In things of the spirit wise men do not seek for glaring incontrovertible proofs which shall fatally stab the very mystery of life with unanswerable logic. Rather are wise men like the Indian guides of frontier legends who search carefully for the slightest displacement of a fallen twig, or perhaps the faint bruise of the grass by a footfall, or a pebble turned out of its place, in order to trace the way their quarry has taken through the pathless wilderness. Such things are not proved. They are surmised by minds made sensitive to the smallest indications of hidden truth.

Therefore we do not imagine that we can prove that man is a misfit in his universe. Neither do we seek to give such proof. We do, however, believe that there are bent twigs, crushed grass, and misplaced pebbles which suggest to the thoughtful that man is indeed a misfit in nature and it is from this fact that his misery arises. Christian thinkers who have followed the trail of man through history for centuries have a very definite interpretation of the origin and nature of man's misery and of the reason why he is a misfit in 'the universe where he lives. That doctrine is that man is a misfit because he has lost adjustment in the spiritual phases of his life. He is miserable because he is out of harmony with God, and that is the meaning of sin.

We admit that this is not the current, popular interpretation of the modern world, yet even in our times it is conceded that most of man's misery comes from maladjustment. Indeed, the whole modern science of psychiatry is built around that one word "maladjustment." More than any other single term perhaps "maladjustment" describes the theory and technique of abnormal psychology in understanding the mental ills of men. Psychiatrists believe that a large part of insanity and many forms of mental derangement are caused by the failure of the afflicted person to adjust himself to his environment, in some manner. Now Christians have no fault with any constructive science which seeks to better the lot of mankind; but it is to be remembered that all of the so-called sciences dealing with human nature, such as politics, economics, sociology, and psychology are, in fact, mixtures of science and philosophy, being in most cases more philosophical than scientific. It would be easy to show that in the composition of each of these sciences there is more of the value judgments of philosophy than of the experimental facts of science. These social sciences, also, are nearly always tendency driven or dogmatic in that they proceed upon certain philosophical suppositions to a foregone conclusion. Many psychiatrists, for



example, do not believe in the spiritual nature of man. Consequently all their efforts at adjustments are bent toward ignoring and paralyzing the spiritual qualities of man's nature to a point where he will be satisfied with himself as a mere animal.

This is the kind of cure that is worse than the disease. It is as if a man living near a junk yard should become depressed by constantly gazing on disorderly piles of scrap and at last his dejection grew so great that he would consult a physician. The physician would offer to cure him by blinding his eyes so that he could no longer see the junk pile. Such a treatment might cure the patient of one form of depression but it would certainly leave him in a worse condition; and likewise there is no doubt that some unbelieving psychiatrists have wrought a similar injury in the spiritual life of their patients. The universal experience of mankind has constantly shown that, broadly speaking, it is impossible for the normal man to become so adjusted to mere physical nature that he finds peace and satisfaction. This is a subject worthy of contemplation by a thoughtful person. Animals do become adjusted to their environment, and while they may not know any ecstasy of happiness, it is certainly true that under normal conditions they do not suffer anything like the common misery of human life. Even Darwin, who first popularized the theory of "nature, red in tooth and claw," took pains in his famous *Origin of Species* to emphasize the fact that, for the most part, the life of animals is pleasant.

"When we reflect on this struggle," he says, "we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply." <sup>[14]</sup>

That is to say the great naturalist believed the life of animals to be on the whole a pleasant one. They do not suffer from fear and anxiety and dread of the future; and especially they do not suffer from the fear of death. And all the philosophers, economists, politicians, physicians, and philanthropists of the world could not, by putting their efforts together, produce for mankind such a great relief as that. Reinhold Niebuhr, in *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, <sup>[15]</sup> points out that the fact that man fears death while the lower animals do not is evidence of man's being of another order of nature. I might add that herein man is like Benjamin Franklin when, sending his kite beyond his view and above the clouds, he felt the sharp tingle of the electric current which came from that distant source down to him. So man lives in two dimensions of life -- spirit and animal. As an animal he would be satisfied with earthly comfort except that he is connected with this vertical line of spiritual reality reaching out into eternity, and from eternity that line brings to him from time to time the sharp lightning strokes of the fear of death which prove his connection with another world.

It is just because his relations with that other world are disordered by sin that he cannot find the conditions of peace in this world. All of his progress in science and the control of nature are thwarted and prevented from fulfilling their rational possibilities by the irrational and destructive element of sin in the life of mankind.

In the prosecution of the first world war, the United States spent enough money to buy every scrap of property and every inch of land from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast. When we think of this and then remember the multiplied billions of dollars spent in the second world war, it is easily apparent that our country is rich enough to give every family a good home, abundant food, education, and all the advantages of a comfortable life. There is only one thing which makes this impossible despite the dreams of idealists: namely, the sinful quality of human nature which will frustrate any such generous purpose. We create inventions which would lighten the toil and increase the comfort of mankind. But great corporations buy up these inventions and hide them away so that their use cannot be enjoyed by the public. Inventions which do reach the public and which promise to make the earth a paradise are soon grasped by warring nations and used to destroy the life of mankind in ways of which even Milton never dreamed. In fact, the famous Russian philosopher, Nicholas Berdyaev, denies that any social reform has ever achieved its end.

It is not necessary to go that far in order to understand that man cannot achieve his object of making a secular paradise of this world as long as he is working at cross-purposes with God. The increasing realization of this fact is sending the greatest thinkers and scholars of the Christian world back to the fundamental doctrine of the nature of man. This movement began in Europe at the end of the first world war, where the hard facts of history moving on the minds of able and brilliant men began to counteract the false theories of religious liberalism which, assuming the perfectibility of human nature, had thrown overboard the Christian doctrine of the sinfulness of man's heart and for generations prophesied that man could by his own effort transcend his fate as a miserable sinner.



The reaction against religious liberalism and modernism was much later in reaching America. In this country, at the close of the first world war, the false prophets of religious liberalism began again to lift the optimistic chant of man's self-redemption which they had been singing in this country for some fifty years.

Following is an example of this optimism written by a famous religious liberal in 1921. Under the caption, "Twenty Years from Now," by Dr. Frank Crane: "Europe will have righted itself; Germany, pruned of her destructive militarism will flourish in newness of strength and with kindness once more minister to the world; in Russia will be one of the mightiest democracies purged of Czarism and Bolshevism. Ireland will have settled down; the Balkan States will have got over the initial difficulties of their young democracies, and this part of Europe will be the paradise of tourists; Mexico will be our well-beloved neighbor; war will have disappeared from the horizon of the world, a whole generation of men will have come to maturity, with their bodies unimpaired and their imaginations unpolluted by alcohol; the labor movement will have outgrown its bitter phase of class warfare and brought on a world-wide sweep of industrial democracy; children will be happier, homes brighter, ignorance less, blatherskites less blustering, useless talk) -- twenty years from now."

We must confess to a sense of nostalgia at the sweet music of Dr. Crane's optimism, for although the writer was not a religious liberal, he was nevertheless able to admire the famous commentator and to appreciate the bold, if diluted, testimony he bore to Christianity in the public press of those days. Of course, we have never expected his prophecy to be fulfilled, but we must say that we wish it had been. Perhaps the keenest of all disappointments is the failure of Dr. Crane's prophecy that the blatherskites would be less in the modern age. The good doctor has defined blatherskites as people given to "blustering, useless talk." So it comes to pass that while the good doctor is now in heaven, doubtless having his theology duly corrected, the blatherskites are still with us on earth, promising the millennium in the 1980's, whereas all Christian realism must insist that the sinful quality of human nature will work in the future as in the past to frustrate the wisest science of the best and strongest men and continue in the life of human society the sin and misery which has been the age-old inheritance of the human race.

Fourteen hundred years ago Augustine wrote: "And Thee would man praise; man, but a particle of Thy creation; man, that bears about him his mortality, the witness of his sin, the witness that Thou resistest the proud: yet would man praise Thee; he, but a particle of Thy creation. Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee." <sup>[16]</sup>

And this will certainly be as true twenty years from now as it was in the days when Christianity was young.

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<sup>3</sup> Shopenhauer, The World as Will and idea Vol. III, pp. 112ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Josiah Royce: The Spirit of Modern Philosophy, p. 245

<sup>5</sup> Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, XXII, 7

<sup>6</sup> John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book XI

<sup>7</sup> John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, Part I

<sup>8</sup> Bhagavad-Gita chap. 11

<sup>9</sup> Harold Rugg, Now Is the Moment

<sup>10</sup> Karl. Heim, God Transcendent, Foundation for a Christian Metaphysic, p p.70-71

11 William Shakespeare, Hamlet Act II, Scene 2

12 Homer, The Odyssey, Book X

13 Alexander Pope, "Essay on Man"

14 Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species, chap. 3

15 Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol.. I, Human Nature, p. 99

16 The Confessions of St. Augustine, Book I



# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

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## Chapter 2

### SIN AS TRANSGRESSION

We live in an age that is eager for novelty. If men in the ancient East said that the "old is better," now in the modern West we reverse that saying automatically without giving much thought to the true state of the case, discarding the old wherever possible. If we cannot do away with the old, we often try to find a new name for it. Like day and night, heat and cold, sickness and health, sin is a permanent element in the life of mankind.

But modern man, since he cannot rid himself of its enormous misery, seeks to explain it away or at least to find new names for it. Therefore the term "sin" is almost entirely ignored in modern conversation and current literature. Pick up your newspaper and the pile of magazines in the rack. The chances are that amid the millions of words there printed this expression will not occur one single time unless it should happen in a newspaper review of some minister's sermon. Nevertheless, sin is with us at all times. It is like a pestilential disease carried on the wind and mixed with the water and clinging to every particle of dust floating through the air. When pestilence is abroad it does no good to seek to avoid it by ignoring it, by refusing to read about it or to talk about it, and by failing to take countermeasures against it. In these years all the progress we have ever made in overcoming pestilences and the onslaughts of disease has been gained by facing the subject boldly and earnestly studying it.

The religions of mankind are a testimony to the existence of sin; they took their rise in history for the very purpose of dealing with this universal evil. Philosophy also would never have been born had it not been for the incentive to study the meaning of life, which the existence of sin has furnished to the thinkers of mankind. Ultimately all suffering has its roots in sin.

The existence of law and government are a testimony to the universality of sin. True, even if there were no sin some kind of social co-operation between men and nations would be necessary, and such co-operation might discharge some of the functions of modern government; but in such a case government and law would be so different from what they now are that they might well bear quite another name altogether. Indeed, some students of the subject regard the whole duty of government as consisting of the repression and control of the evil, antisocial element in society, allowing the normal, creative powers of human nature freedom to develop a wholesome progress. Such a society would need no government if all sin were eliminated. In other words, all the penitentiaries, prisons, soldiers, police, and judges in the world are a testimony to the universal spread of the disease of sin.

While many modern social reformers have labored assiduously to eradicate the ancient Christian conceptions of sin (this does not apply to all -- very true Christian is to some extent a social reformer), nevertheless social reformers have uncovered an enormous junk pile of social evil in our world which they sometimes call "social lag" but which might as well be called sin. We insist that if any person wishes to do the kind of exact thinking necessary in critical studies he cannot find any explanation of the mass social evil of our times if he discards the description and the interpretation of man's paradoxical nature given in the Christian doctrine of sin.

Logically the discussion of religion and of theology begins with the doctrine of God, but psychologically that study begins with the doctrine of sin for unless men have a sense of sin they do not even begin to think about the nature of God. According to sacred history the Christian doctrine began with the study of sin. The great events of Jesus' ministry were prefaced by the preaching of John the Baptist that men should repent (Matt. 3:1-2), and the ministry of Jesus himself began with his work of preaching repentance. "From that time," says Matthew, "Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17).



Serious thinkers are beginning to sense the fact that the principal cause of the weakness of the Christianity of our times is the failure of the modern church to understand and to preach the scriptural doctrine of sin and man's miserable condition therein. The study of history will show that the great spiritual leaders of the Christian church have been men who were awakened by the Spirit of God to see the awful nature of sin.

The excuse which is made in our day for a shallow doctrine and a weak conviction of sin is that such a deep experience is unnecessary and impossible where children are properly reared. The answer to this is that the three greatest leaders of the church since the Apostolic Age -Augustine, Luther, and Wesley -- were all carefully trained in Christian teaching and life in their childhood. And while Augustine admits going into sin, it is very certain that his deep sense of sin was due as much to his Christian insight as to the objective enormity of his evil life before the world, for in the opinion of the present day the life of Augustine before his conversion would be regarded as quite respectable. In the cases of Luther and Wesley, however, it is strictly accurate to say that they were drilled in religion as a soldier is trained for battle, and their lives were very strict and religious from childhood. Yet all these men, good by the standards of their age, live in history as men who knew a deep and terrible conviction of sin. This fact is what made them Christian leaders. They had a deep sense of sorrow for sin and joy for redemption. If the doctrine of sin is so important, it will be worth our time to give the matter earnest thought. Let us consider first some of the theories which have held the field in regard to the nature of sin.

## THEORIES OF SIN

### Sin Is Due to Human Limitations

In all history this is one of the most common theories of the nature of sin. And because it is more or less concealed in nearly all the preaching and writing about sin in our times, it is desirable to seek to understand it. In order to strip this theory of all philosophical terms it will be necessary to oversimplify to some extent. Men have throughout the whole Christian Era held the view that inasmuch as God is infinite and man is limited, therefore the demands of God are so high and sweeping that we of limited and finite minds can never hope to live up to them. The books of theology are full of this theory written by men who deny its philosophical validity yet hold to it as a practical rule of the Christian life.

This kind of reasoning is a fallacy into which the most brilliant minds have fallen. But it is like saying that a mother who is a Ph.D. in psychology will impose college work on her kindergarten child and will expect far more of that child than is humanly possible for it to do. Stated in this way, the theory falls flat. We should expect a mother who is a doctor of philosophy to allow for the weakness and immaturity of her child. Yet we find Christian theologians maintaining that because God is all wise he expects more of human beings than it is at all possible for them to perform. I grant you that a scholarly mother might set a higher standard for her child than would an ignorant mother, and I believe that God sets a higher standard for men than the average man sets for himself. But we cannot believe that the infinity of God, including as it does infinity of wisdom, can set an infinite standard for weak and finite men.

This is one of the criticisms we have of the able work of Reinhold Niebuhr, in volume one of *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. While he explicitly denies this theory, he does emphasize the finite nature of man to a point which creates the distinct impression that on account of his weak, limited human nature man cannot cease from sin in this life. And in volume two Niebuhr strongly suggests <sup>[17]</sup> that even Jesus himself was not sinless on account of his being a finite, human being.

The great thinkers of the church have worked out the various phases of this doctrine of the sinfulness of finite existence. Augustine explains sin as a lack of being; Leibnitz teaches that it is unavoidable because it rises from the necessary limitation of the creature. Outside the church a similar doctrine of sin is held by Christian Scientists and like schools of thought, who maintain that sin is simply a negative thing, a thing which is not.

### Sin Due to an Eternal Principle of Evil

Another widespread theory of sin is that there is an eternal principle of evil, which the Parsis of India, following the ancient doctrine of Zoroaster, hold to this day. This principle of evil is personal; it is an eternal god of sin who divides the



universe with the eternal God of holiness. The Gnostics, Marcionites, and Manicheans do not go that far, but maintain that sin is in matter, as in the elements of nature and the body of mankind.

It is not necessary to dwell long on such a pagan doctrine, although it is true that there are Christians today who believe that the devil is eternal as God is eternal. They do not understand that if the devil were as eternal as God there would be two Gods. However, it is unreasonable to think of two Gods, both eternal and both omnipotent.

### Sin Due to the Appetites of the Body

There is also the theory that the sensuous nature of man's body is the cause of sin. This theory is similar to the finite limitation theory except that it is somewhat more definite in locating sin in the exercise of man's natural desires and appetites. The ancient church long held the theory that sexual desire is the original sin which cursed the race. Scholars say that this is the reason why fish may be eaten during Lent -- because in ancient times it was believed that fish were generated spontaneously from the water, whereas animals were generated through a supposedly sinful act of passion and therefore fish was permitted in Lent and animal meat rejected. In modern times all educated people know that the theoretical foundation of the custom is not true, but the traditional practice continues just the same.

It is undoubtedly true that the passions of the flesh are among the most frequent and conspicuous occasions of sin. But to locate sin in the flesh in a physical sense is missing the whole Christian teaching about the nature of sin. If this theory were true, ascetic practices which punish and weaken the flesh would have spiritual value. Moreover, older people would have a great spiritual advantage and would by the very weight of age attain to saintliness, a statement which both observation and the Scriptures disprove.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT TERMS FOR SIN

Undoubtedly the New Testament doctrine of sin is best understood by studying the discourses of the sacred Writers upon this subject. Nevertheless, it will help us somewhat to a better insight of the subject to take up the various terms which the New Testament writers use to describe the fact of sin. The most common word in the Greek New Testament for sin is hamartia. In its various forms it appears some one hundred and fifty-eight times in the New Testament. It is a word which means "to miss the mark." The next most commonly used word is adikia, which means "injustice or unrighteousness." In various forms this word is found sixty-six times in the New Testament. Paraptoma, "a falling away or a false step," appears twenty-three times. After this comes anomia, "disobedience to the divine law" or "anti-law." The term occurs in all forms twenty-three times in the New Testament. Asebeia, "ungodliness or irreverence," occurs in all its forms some seventeen times in the New Testament. In various forms parabasis, "a false step, transgression," appears twelve times. These are the principal words used in the Greek New Testament to describe sin.

One notable characteristic of these terms for sin is that they all indicate a maladjustment of some kind. I am aware that we must not place too much weight upon the etymology of a word, as its true meaning is to be discovered from its use. Nevertheless, it cannot be wholly without interest to find that every one of these New Testament terms indicates a deviation from a goal of some kind, a loss of contact, a failure to make connections. The form of these words in the Greek indicates as much to the student.

The first impression to a careless reader would be that sin is excusable, that it is failing to hit the target after the archer has earnestly tried. That, however, is not the true meaning. The idea conveyed in all these terms, each of which is a rhetorical figure in itself, is that a sublime objective lies before every soul. To reach this goal is the most important thing in human life, and the man who fails does so through his own fault.

The whole New Testament doctrine of sin is focused in the one word of the Apostle: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4).

We cannot understand the scriptural doctrine of sin until we have channeled our thinking into strictly personal relations with God. Many thinkers seek to transcend the bounds of our finite human life by thinking of God and the law in impersonal terms, but nothing is known about God and no religious thoughts of God can arise until and unless we think of him as a person. The moralism of the age has created a thousand statutes, mostly concerned with our relations to our



fellow man, and yet when we think in these terms we can always find excuses for our failure. The sense of sin never awakens until we come face to face with God as a person and say as did David: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

The clearest and most reasonable doctrine of sin arises when we think of the law of God not as ten thousand statutes, but as God's personal will concerning us. The modern conception of law is an impersonal statute, administered by officials supposedly indifferent to the persons concerned. However valuable this conception of law may be, it is important to remember that it was not common in the days when the Bible was written and that that Book was composed in the language of the people of its own time.

For primitive people the law was always the will of the sovereign. That will was supreme. People who were within reach of the king's immediate presence needed no written law: they knew what the king expected of them and that was enough. Written law represented a lower state of fellowship with the king. To be subject to the king's written commands and edicts was to be virtually an exile. This is undoubtedly what the Apostle Paul meant by his teaching that we as Christians are not under the law: we do not live on the faraway edges of the kingdom where the will of the King comes to us only by written edicts. We live in the King's presence where we know his will by constant communion with him. Such a servant will not be less obedient to the King, but more completely conformable to all the subtle and intangible signs by which the King communicates his wishes. God says: "I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. 32:8).

The idea that there might be a set of thousands of formal laws largely unknown and utterly impossible of fulfillment which can come between the Christian soul and God and blast that soul moment by moment, or at least daily, with wrath and guilt in spite of his love for God and of God's love for him -- this doctrine is contrary to all the New Testament. The folly of such a dogma is seen when we remember that sin is not a physical thing. Sin is a disturbance of relation between persons. If there were only one man in all the world it would be impossible for that man to commit nearly every sin one could name. He could not steal, he could not lie, he could not be guilty of murder. The only sins he could commit would be sins against God because there would still be a relation between him and God. Such thoughts as this will show us that the soul of man comes first before any human law, and the being of God comes first before any law regulating the relation of his creatures to him. The relation of man to God comes before any other law. It is the basis of all law.

The beginning of all sin is, then, that man has broken relations of love to God. It is God's supreme will concerning himself that man should love God and his brother and live in fellowship with both. The result of this love relationship is that all good becomes possible. Here he would be holy, here he would be happy. In this relationship he would perfect his powers, develop his potentialities, and keep the law, which is nothing else but the will of God concerning him for his moral and spiritual education. That will is set forth in the positive laws of the New Testament.

This is the teaching of Jesus who, when he was demanded to cite the two greatest commandments, immediately set them forth as follows: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength and . . . thy neighbor as thyself." These two laws seem to be simply a principle which could be put into shorter form: "Live in love." In other words, the man who loves God properly cannot behave in an unlovely manner to any member of the human race. According to the teaching of Jesus, then, the supreme law of life is to love God; and if that is the supreme law of Christ it is evident that the act of sin is the violation of that law. "Love," says the Apostle, "is the fulfilling of the law"; and this profound thought will shed a brilliant light upon the whole question of sin and salvation. The fulfilling of the law is love. The sin which violates the law is not primarily pride, selfishness, lust, cruelty, or blasphemy. First of all, that sin is simply lack of love to God. Contemplation of this idea will show us how far the Christian conception of sin is from that of the world of our times, for men may be godless, indifferent to God, lacking in love of God, and yet stand high in the honor and esteem of men. Furthermore, this definition reveals to us the necessity of supernatural religion, for the natural man simply finds it impossible merely to love God or even to understand what it would mean to love God.

This was the sin which convicted a certain seeker at the beginning of his Christian experience as a child. He realized that he could not claim to be a Christian because he could not love God as the Bible commands men to do, and he was at a loss to know how a person can love God any more than he can love the multiplication table or the principle of gravitation. It is only when one attempts to know God by faith in the experiences of the new birth that he can understand this mystery, for it is then that God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).



## The Command to Do the Impossible

Christians have pondered for ages the paradox that mankind seems to be commanded to do the impossible and yet is held guilty for not doing it. Plainly, according to the doctrine set forth in these pages it is man's duty to love God, but if that love is lacking in his heart how can he exercise it? And if he cannot obey the law, why should he be held guilty for failing to do the impossible? This difficulty that has confused generations of Christians has a simple solution: man does not have what it takes to fulfill God's law. Nevertheless, he is not free from guilt for his failure, because God offers him the thing which he needs to make that fulfillment complete. This is so plain one must wonder that it has been a cause for perplexity. A surgeon has the duty of performing a surgical operation, yet regardless of his skill and ability he cannot do the work with his bare hands alone; he must have surgical instruments. Nevertheless, if he knows how and where to get those instruments we would not hold him innocent if he let the patient die while excusing his negligence on the plea that he could not perform the operation because he did not have the necessary equipment. The skilled workman could do but few of the things which must be done in our great factories if he were compelled to work with his bare hands only. But he is not excusable if he is negligent when the management has given him a vast quantity of tools to do the work which would otherwise be impossible for him. And so it is with man. In this world, born with a sinful nature. With his bare hand, so to speak, he cannot serve God, he cannot refrain from sin, he cannot work righteousness, he cannot do God's will; but God has placed at his hand the gift of His grace and love. Therefore, all that is necessary is that he shall open the hand of faith and receive instruments from God's hand which will make it possible for him to love God and his fellow man and keep free from sin.

In order to discuss the subject of sin properly it is important to bear in mind this question which has been debated in Christianity for centuries. In its modern form this debate is carried on by Calvinism and Arminianism

### CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM CONTRASTED

Calvinism is the doctrine that even before they are born men are predestined to be saved or to be lost. Arminianism is the doctrine of freedom of the will -- that men are truly on probation in this world and have some opportunity to make a moral choice every moment of conscious life, from birth to death. Calvinists emphasize the nature of sin as a state of hostility toward God wherein men sin unconsciously in almost every activity of their lives. Men, they say, are not only guilty of the sins of ignorance, but also of the state of sinfulness in which they live.

Arminians admit that men are born depraved, that is, with an inclination toward sin. They deny, however, that this sin makes anyone guilty before he has reached the age of accountability and has thus accepted this sinfulness as his own by an act of the will. Thus Calvinists have stressed the involuntary, instinctive nature of sin and Arminians have insisted that this instinctive tendency toward sin is not such as to make the individual guilty until he gives his own consent thereto. In other words, the measure of ability is the measure of obligation.

Arminians call the native depravity of man sin in an accommodative sense. The older Arminians tried to conform their phraseology to the popular orthodoxy of the day as far as possible. In this, however, they also followed scriptural precedent, for Paul called the sinful tendency "sin." Speaking of an unconscious element within him before he came to the age of accountability, he said, "Sin revived, and I died." Here, Arminians insist, was the point when he accepted responsibility for his inward depravity and thus acquired guilt by giving it his voluntary consent.

Writing of all the Protestant churches at the time of the Sixteenth-Century Reformation, Dr. Charles Hodge says: "Founding their doctrine on their moral and religious consciousness and upon the Word of God, they declared sin to be the transgression of, or want of conformity to, the divine law. In this definition all classes of theologians, Lutheran and Reformed, agree." [18]

Nevertheless, John Wesley's definition of sin is quite different. For him, sin is "the wilful violation of the known law of God." [19]

Conformable to this definition is one given by the famous Wesleyan theologian, Dr. W. B. Pope, who writes: "First with



reference to God, it [sin] is the voluntary separation of the human will from the divine expressed in disobedience to his law. Second, in relation to man it is guilt as the consciousness of personal wrong and personal liability to punishment." [20]

A good Arminian definition of sin is given by Prof. John Miley: "Sin is disobedience to a law of God conditioned on free moral agency and opportunity of knowing the law." [21]

Calvinists condemn the Wesleyan doctrine of sin, holding that it is not deep enough. Dr. Hodge expands the definition of sin as follows: "It is included in these definitions: (1) that sin is a specific evil, differing from all other forms of evil. (2) That sin stands related to law. The two are correlative, so that where there is no law there can be no sin. (3) That the law to which sin is thus related is not merely the law of reason, or of conscience, or of expediency but the law of God. (4) That sin consists essentially in the want of conformity on the part of a rational creature to the nature or law of God. (5) That it includes guilt and moral pollution."

Dr. Hodge proceeds to develop the Calvinistic doctrine that God's demands are so exacting no Christian can ever live up to them. He writes: "If this principle be correct, if the law demands entire conformity to the nature and will of God, it follows:

"That there can be no perfection in this life. Every form of perfectionism which has ever prevailed in the church is founded either on the assumption that the law does not demand entire freedom from moral evil, or upon the denial that anything is of the nature of sin, but acts of the will. But if the law is so extensive in its demands as to pronounce all defect in any duty, all coming short in the purity, ardor, or constancy of holy affections, sinful, then there is an end to the presumption that any mere man since the fall has ever attained perfection." [22]

Here Dr. Hodge opposes some positions Wesleyans do not hold. We believe that "the law does demand entire freedom from moral evil," but also that the grace of God supplies the need here. And we allow that there are unconscious, sinful acts growing out of depraved hearts already hardened by previous sin. But no such acts are possible on the part of regenerated and quickened believers. But to us the most amazing thing in Dr. Hodge's argument is his complete indifference to the supernatural power of the "blood of Jesus Christ his Son which cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

Moreover, Dr. Hodge here (and many like him) plainly infers that anything short of infinity must be of the nature of sin, but on this ground all Christian theology is vain and all redemption is impossible. For if this is true, not even the highest archangel can ever be free from sin, as even the angels are finite.

Dr. Hodge then proceeds to maintain that not only an act of deliberate self-determination but all spontaneous impulsive exercises of the feelings and affections are in a sense voluntary. Also, he holds that whatever inheres in the will, as a habit of disposition, is called voluntary as belonging to the will. "There is," he says, "a sinfulness as well as sins; there is such a thing as character as distinguished from transient acts by which it is revealed; that is, a sinful state, abiding, inherent, immanent forms of evil, which are truly and properly of the nature of sin. All sin, therefore, is not an agency, activity, or act; it may be and is also a condition or state of the mind. This distinction between habitual and actual sin has been recognized and admitted in the Church from the beginning." [23]

While we are willing to admit that there are states of sin as well as acts of sin, and that an evil disposition or wrong attitude may be fully as destructive spiritually as a definite willful act, nevertheless it seems evident that this Calvinistic doctrine has been exaggerated out of all likeness to the truth of the gospel. For example, this principle has been interpreted to mean that every act of a Christian man is tainted with sin because it is impossible to assert of any given act that it could not have been better.

Take the act of prayer. A mother is praying for the salvation of her son. The critics say that that act is tainted with sin because it is selfish. Possibly she is thinking of the enjoyment she will have in the increased devotion of her son to herself and of her pride in his respectability. and in his prestige reflected upon her after he is saved. Inasmuch as there are motives like this unknown to a person who is doing a good deed, the point is obvious that even in prayer and preaching there is not lacking the quality of sin, they say.



A certain theological professor held this view. Finally, he came to have a conference on the subject with two other Christian men, but before they sat down to consider the subject it was agreed that they should have prayer. After prayer, one of the brethren asked the professor, "Now, professor, you say there is sin in all that we do. Let me ask you which is the greater sin, to pray for light on this subject as we have prayed together today or to go out and murder a man?" The professor was embarrassed because, on the principle that all human frailty is sin, it is hard to make a common-sense distinction in such unreasonable doctrines.

On this point, the famous Church of England theologian and friend of Wesley, John Fletcher, of Madeley, writes: "Does a well-meant mistake defile the conscience? You inadvertently encourage idleness and drunkenness by kindly relieving an idle, drunken beggar, who imposes upon your charity by plausible lies: is this loving error a sin? A blundering apothecary sends you arsenic for alum; you use it as alum, and poison your child; but are you a murderer, if you give the fatal dose in love? Suppose the tempter had secretly mixed some of the forbidden fruit with other fruits that Eve had lawfully gathered for use; would she have sinned if she had inadvertently eaten of it, and given a share to her husband? After humbly confessing and deploring her undesigned error, her secret fault, her accidental offense, her involuntary trespass, would she not have been as innocent as ever? I go further still, and ask, May not a man who holds many right opinions be a perfect lover of the world? And by a parity of reason, may not a man who holds many wrong opinions be a perfect lover of God? Have not some Calvinists died with their hearts overflowing with perfect love, and their heads full of the notion that God set his everlasting, absolute hatred upon myriads of men before the foundation of the world? Nay, is it not even possible that a man, whose heart is renewed in love, should, through mistaken humility, or through weakness of understanding, oppose the name of Christian perfection, when he desires, and perhaps enjoys the thing?" <sup>[24]</sup>

Then he continues on the question of God's demands above our ability. "Does not St. Paul's rule hold in spirituals as well as in temporals? 'It is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.' Does our Lord actually require more of believers than they can actually do through his grace? And when they do it to the best of their power, does he not see some perfection in their works, insignificant as those works may be? 'Remove this immense heap of stones,' says an indulgent father to his children, 'and be diligent according to your strength.' While the eldest, a strong man, removes rocks, the youngest, a little child, is as cheerfully busy as any of the rest in carrying sands and pebbles. Now, may not his childlike obedience be as excellent in its degree and, of consequence, as acceptable to his parent, as the manly obedience of his eldest brother? Nay, though he does next to nothing, may not his endeavors, if they are more cordial, excite a smile of superior approbation on the face of his loving father, who looks at the disposition of the heart more than at the appearance of the work? Had the believers of Sardis cordially laid out all their talents, would our Lord have complained that he did not 'find their works perfect before God?' (Rev. 3:2). And was it not according to this rule of perfection that Christ testified the poor widow, who had given but two mites, had nevertheless cast more into the treasury than all the rich, 'though they had cast in much'; because, our Lord himself being Judge, she had 'given all that she had'? Now could she give, or did God require more than her all? And when she thus heartily gave her all, did she not do (evangelically speaking) a perfect work, according to her dispensation and circumstances?" <sup>[25]</sup>

Browning has stated it thus:

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work," must sentence pass,  
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;

But all the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:  
Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,

Fancies that broke thro' language and escaped:



All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped. <sup>[26]</sup>

The idea that God makes infinite demands upon limited and finite persons is so unreasonable that it is difficult to discuss it with moderation. To say that a Christian is a sinner because he does not perform at every minute of his life the utmost that we can imagine him capable of doing is to set a false and strange standard of Christian living. Even God does not do all that he could do in any given instance. There is a tree standing outside my window; God could make that tree reach up to the moon, and that no one can deny. And yet he does not do so for his own reasons.

#### ALL NEW ACTS OF SIN ARE WILLFUL

The definition of sin given by Wesley was formulated by a man of religious genius and a great scholar, and it may be defended as the definition of any new act of sin. Our observation teaches us that an act of sin is likely to have a paralyzing effect upon the conscience, so that those who live in sin for many years become so hardened in their consciences that they commit gross sins, apparently quite unconsciously. Each of these sins, however, is a link in the chain in the group of sins to which it belongs. Undoubtedly, the beginning of the source of sin which it represents was made consciously by a troubled and tempted soul. Many people regard a lie so lightly that they lie unconsciously and apparently without compunction, but when they began the habit of lying the sin of lying was, as Wesley says, a willful violation of the known law of God. And so with other sins of like nature. This principle rules in the case of the Christian in comparison with the sinner. While some sinners commit gross sins unconsciously without deliberation and without compunction, the sensitive heart of the Christian will not be in danger of such unconscious, unintentional sinning as that. For such a person an act of sin is a dreadful thing, and -

Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first notion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:  
The genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council; and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection. <sup>[27]</sup>

And such an act is not done unconsciously. In other words, to nurture and cherish an evil disposition, sinful habits, and gross wickedness without even being conscious of the fact is the penalty of one or more of the kinds of sins which Wesley defines as willful transgression of the known will of God.

The will of God, or the law of God, for each individual is not merely a code of many statutes; neither is it a demand for infinite power, wisdom, beauty, and grace such as not even angels could produce. It is infinite in another respect. It is the focusing upon each individual soul, weak, finite, human, and limited, of the infinite wisdom, knowledge, and love of God. And that infinite knowledge and wisdom judges exactly what the individual is capable of at a given time.

He will be weaker than some and stronger than others, and the law by which he is judged is the law of God's infinite intelligence measuring his capacities and leading him upward along a path of infinite development. As he moves along that path he walks in the light, and as he walks in the light he experiences the miracle-working power of the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin (I John 1:7). Love progresses toward the goal of infinite perfection which he will never reach because he will never be God.

The very moment a man begins to assent to God's will, at that moment he begins to know what God's will for him is. Jesus said, "If any man will do his [Jesus'] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Therefore, while it is possible for a sinner to sin unconsciously, even a seeker begins to know what God's will is for him at that moment; and that is the law which governs his life. Thus we take the Calvinistic definition of sin and interpret it in an Arminian manner.

In the case of a soul that is sensitive to God, sin must be willful because the law of God is not merely some distant, learned, legal book but a principle written in his heart -- "The law written in their hearts," says Paul.

Transgression of the law of God, then, is violating or sinning against the light which we have of God's will concerning us,



and lack of conformity to the divine law is failure to live up to what we know God expects and demands of us as individuals.

Thus we reconcile the Arminian and Calvinistic definitions of sin by understanding the law of God as the "light which lightens every man who cometh into the world," of which man himself is conscious, or becomes conscious, when he assumes the penitent attitude toward God.

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17 Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. II, *Human Destiny*, p. 73

18 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. H, p. 180

19 Daniel Steele, *A Defense of Christian Perfection*, p. 42

20 W. B. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, Vol. II, p. 29

21 John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.. I, p. 528

22 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 185

23 *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 186-187

24 John Fletcher, *Checks to Antinomianism*, Vol. II, p. 500

25 *Loc. cit.*

26 Robert Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra"

27 William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act II, Scene 1

# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

## Chapter 3

### THE FUNDAMENTAL QUALITY OF SIN

Writers on the subject of the fundamental quality of sin often make an effort to trace sin to its final meaning. Some say that the fact of sin is explained by man's ignorance of the right. If he knew the right he would do it. Undoubtedly men who really sin are ignorant of God; nevertheless, it is a willful ignorance, and the experience of mankind has shown that it takes more than light and knowledge to make men live good lives. For it sometimes happens that men sin against very great light and knowledge of the truth, thereby making themselves all the greater sinners in spite of their knowledge.

We are told that the end of life is happiness and sin is the substitution of the pleasures of physical sense, appetite, and passion for the true happiness of the good life. To this the answer is that it is certainly true that the life of obedience to God will yield the greatest happiness. Nevertheless, the Bible nowhere teaches that happiness is to be the supreme end of life. It is one of the weaknesses of our modern Christianity that we have set the creature above the creator by interpreting religion purely from the standpoint of what it will do for us, whereas the Bible always interprets religion in the light of what we owe to God. By sinning, men do indeed miss the way of happiness, but that is only incidental to an even greater loss. Furthermore, this theory can lead to asceticism by condemning the innocent enjoyment of the legitimate pleasures of this earthly life.

Some there are who say that the root idea of sin is pride. Man departs from God by exalting himself into rebellion against God's supreme law. It is certainly true that pride is sinful and is doubtless a potent cause of rebellion against God. Nevertheless, we believe that pride is a symptom, a fruit of sin, rather than the root sin itself as is indicated by the fact that no one ever becomes proud until he has already fallen into sin.

Many treatises on sin place its essential nature in its chief characteristic, namely, selfishness, but it is possible to show that some sins do not conceivably benefit self. Modern psychologists have described an experience of human nature in which a man turns his hatred inwardly against himself and thus becomes guilty of self-murder. Therefore it seems better to say that the essential sin is deviation from God's love, for whatever cause, and that commonly in human life the first and chief characteristic of this rebellion is seen as selfishness and self-love, the alienation of the love of the heart from God to self.

This self-love manifests itself in many obscure and self-deceptive ways. For example, some men pride themselves on their unselfishness because of their love of their family, friends, or other favored individuals. Psychologists are too much for these men, for they show that such people have by no means escaped from self-love: they have simply identified friends and family with self, and they love these as part of themselves. Proof of this is found in the fact that when one of these friends, or even a close member of the family, boldly violates the supposed interest of that man's self, then his love turns to hatred.

It is the teaching of Paul that faith identifies the believer with Christ in a way somewhat similar to that described by modern psychologists except that love for Christ really does transcend the human self and becomes truly unselfish.

Speaking of sin, Dr. W. B. Pope says: "First, with reference to God, it is the voluntary separation of the human will from the Divine, expressed in disobedience to His law. Second, in relation to man, it is guilt, as the consciousness of personal wrong and personal liability to punishment." <sup>[28]</sup>

I would amend this by placing the whole personality at the point of alienation and say not only the will but also the love of



the heart separates from God.

We believe that the essence of sin is rejection of the love of God. We prove this by two facts: first, God is love; second, God's law, which all men must violate in order to become sinners, is the law commanding us to love God and mankind. This puts the whole doctrine of sin on a voluntary basis so far as its beginning is concerned. Once a man shot himself in the head and thus blinded his eyes forever. After this man became blind he was in a condition from which he could not extricate himself and his subsequent life of blindness was lived, as we may say, against his will. Nevertheless, his total life of blindness was centered in an act of his own will. He became blind for life, not involuntarily, but because he committed the act that blinded him. In the same way, every sinner is such at the beginning because of his rejection of God's way of love, light, and life.

When a man has turned aside from the love of God he becomes a prey to every form of sin, and thus he falls into the various kinds of sin we have already enumerated, such as selfish pride, lust, spiritual blindness, and the like.

## THE BEGINNING OF SIN

If you ask how this stepping aside can occur at the beginning, the answer is that the evident purpose of man's earthly life is the creation of holy character, and that means character which is established in immovable devotion to God. This is not a philosophical fumble in the dark, but a clear statement of Holy Writ. Paul states the object of cleansing and sanctifying Christ's church as being that "he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

This purpose of God is applied to individuals by Paul when he describes the atonement as being intended to "present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight" (Col. 1:22). And to this great purpose Paul bends all the energies of his being, preaching and teaching "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (vs. 28). The supreme goal of human life is expressed in Jude as being "to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

But this holy character is not formed without the strain and stress, the tempest and struggle of combat, for "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). God gave man a holy nature at the beginning, but this nature was not only innocent of sin, it was also ignorant of evil. It had had no experience of contact with evil. If man had held with perfect faith to the revelation of God's will not to eat of the tree of knowledge, then he would have been greatly strengthened. And by continuing in the path of faith and loving conformity to God's will he would have matured in the holy character of a friend of God and the end of his existence would have been achieved. It is our belief that he would in due time have passed on to heaven without dying -- but that is another story.

## How Man Fell

Let us, then, examine the process by which man fell. The key is found in I John 2:16: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Thus we see that the break with God's love began by a transfer of man's love from God to some other thing. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (vs. 16). The lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh are sinful by being contaminated by the sinful quality of man's nature; but at the very beginning, before man had ever sinned, there were certain instincts and desires which were necessary for the maintenance of his life. These desires were innocent at the beginning but became the occasion of sin. When Eve looked upon the forbidden fruit she was influenced by the desire of the eyes. When she imagined how good it would taste, she was moved by the desires of the flesh. As these desires moved her she let down the shield of faith; in other words, she began to doubt God. This breaking of the tie of faith broke the circle of perfect love in her heart and opened the door for the rebellious action which constitutes sinning. The first sin, therefore, and the beginning of any course of sin, is a sin against love, which originates in a lack of faith or personal confidence and trust in God.

## WHAT IS THE LOVE OF GOD?

Love is an attraction felt for another person. This attraction manifests itself by approval and admiration of that person, by



the desire to be in his company, to please him, and to have his approval and admiration.

Most human love is partial and imperfect, but complete love would affect and influence a man in every power of his being. "The spring of action," writes Aristotle, "thus resolves itself into one single thing, viz., the object of desire. For if there were two faculties acting as springs to action -- reason on the one hand, desire on the other -- they would have to move in virtue of some common character they shared. Now reason, it is found, does not act as a spring of action independently of desire: for settled wish is a form of desire, and when a man is led to act according to his reasonable conviction he is moved as so in a manner corresponding to his wish." [29]

In other words, love is desire, and desire moves every power of the soul. Love moves the mind to admire the beloved. The love of God makes us appreciate the beauty of his eternal truth and thus praise him for his holy and glorious nature. In the region of the emotions love makes one feel deeply toward the beloved. Love to God makes us feel a desire to be with him, to be like him, to see him as he is, and to enjoy the pleasure of his fellowship.

This love is the "expulsive power of a new affection" which repels sin by making us love God and his ways. In the region of the will love manifests itself by doing things which please the lover. Jesus said "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). Thus complete love toward God is seen to affect every phase of human consciousness, and that is what Jesus said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

While it is possible, to some extent, to love people whom we do not completely trust, it is nevertheless true that trust, or faith, is a component part of complete, normal love. Any lack of trust or confidence in a person implies fear that that person may do one some injury, more or less, and "he that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18). Thus we see that "perfect love casteth out fear" and is only possible in the exercise of a perfect faith. This faith need not be intellectually developed into definite mental conceptions. It may be the simple faith which an infant has in its mother. The child has no idea what the mother is going to do with him or for him, but he has faith that, in his mother's arms, he is perfectly safe and therefore free from all fear, worry, and anxiety about the future. This is the characteristic of proper love to God.

## THE BASIS OF LOVE TO GOD

Doubtless our first impulse is to ask, Who is equal to these things? How can man ever exercise such love as that? To this there is but one answer and it is from the Word of God: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). It is something into which our hearts are directed by the Lord: "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (II Thess. 3:5).

This, of course, is a supernatural experience. There is no way by which a man can generate this love in his heart by his own unaided effort. America's greatest psychologist, William James, understood this better than many professed Christians seem to understand it. "I believe," he writes, "that a candid consideration of piecemeal supernaturalism and a complete discussion of all its metaphysical bearings will show it to be the hypothesis by which the largest number of legitimate requirements are met ... What I now say sufficiently indicates to the philosophic reader the place where I belong." <sup>30</sup>

We, too, are not ashamed to stand in this place so boldly held by all the writers of the New Testament.

Having discussed sin as transgression, let us consider its results as guilt and corruption. "Guilt," writes Prof. Wm. Newton Clarke, "results from the commission of sin. From every point of view sin is a dreadful thing and it is dreadful to have willed it and committed it. Guilt is the personal blameworthiness that follows the commission of sin. It consists in the fact that the person in question is the one who has done the deed, and upon whom the blame of it rests and must rest. Such is the guilt, for example, of murder. It is not mere liability to the punishment of murder: that is a misleading idea, and a very inferior one. A trial in a criminal court is designed to ascertain whether the accused is guilty, i.e., whether he is the man who has done the evil deed in question. If he is, liability to punishment follows, but it is not identical with guilt. The guilt consists rather in the fact that the man, wherever he is and whatever he is doing, sleeping or waking, working or playing, following his favorite pursuits or kissing his innocent children, is the man who has murdered another, and upon whom the



responsibility and wickedness of the act abide. He is guilty of it: that is to say, he has done it, and is to blame for it" <sup>[31]</sup>

While guilt is not mere liability to punishment but something even more dreadful, it must be borne in mind that guilt does involve the liability of punishment. "Guilt has another meaning. It is the sure obligation to punishment." <sup>[32]</sup> This punishment involves spiritual death, which is the separation of the soul from the Holy Spirit, which only giveth life, and the substitution of self for God in the throne room of the soul. This is a punishment because of the measureless evils which it brings on the soul. Moreover, man loses his dominion over his physical and emotional life. He becomes carnally minded and "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22).

Another penalty of sin is that the universe without and the soul within, being emptied of God, becomes the temple of false gods and man becomes an idolater. "Therefore he . . . changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:23).

Idolatry is fully as common in so-called Christian lands as in heathenism, for Paul says that covetousness is idolatry. If money is the idol of some people, it stands to reason that there are many other gods which must take the place of the true God in the temple once deserted by him. Sin, having taken its root in the soul, grows in power with each added transgression. The increase in depravity becomes part of the penalty of sin.

Physical death is the supreme earthly penalty of sin but it has its meaning principally because it is the analogue of the spiritual death which brings endless separation from God. This briefly describes the nature of guilt and penalty. We must remember, however, that in the case of infants who have no proper knowledge of sin, these evils of sin become unfortunate consequences of an act of sin concerning which they have no guilt and in which they suffer no penalty, inasmuch as penalty can only be a consequence of guilt. Even physical death in children is nothing like the terrible thing that it is to sinful adults because, as Paul says "the sting of death is sin."

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<sup>28</sup> W. B. Pope, A Compendium of Christian Theology, Vol. II, p. 29

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, The Nature of the Soul, III, 10

<sup>30</sup> William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 523

<sup>31</sup> Wm. Newton Clarke, Outline of Christian Theology, p. 246

<sup>32</sup> W. B. Pope, A Compendium of Christian Theology, Vol. II, p. 36

# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

## Chapter 4

### THE BASIS OF SALVATION

If there is one doctrine upon which all historic Christianity is agreed it is the fundamental teaching that salvation is made available to mankind through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This sacrifice is usually taken to mean the whole history of Christ's incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection, although frequently only one aspect of this divine drama is taken as representative of them all. That salvation is the result of the entire life and work of Christ is evident in the language of Paul, said of Christ Jesus: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:6-11). This passage traces the redemption of mankind to the entire work of Christ in all his incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension to glory. In his redemption work Christ is likened to a sacrificial lamb under the ancient temple order: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). This was no doubt an allusion to the ritual ordained in Exodus: "Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even" (29:38-39). The prophet Isaiah proclaimed that the suffering Messiah should be brought as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7), and the Book of Revelation represents Christ as "a Lamb slain" (5:6) and "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (13:8). "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Pet. 1:18-20). Moreover, this is Christ's own interpretation of his work, for he said: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:51, 53). "But God commendeth his love toward us," says Paul, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Rom. 5:8-10). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews voices the same truth: "Since the children then share blood and flesh, he himself participated in their nature, so that by dying he might crush him who wields the power of death (that is to say, the devil) and release from thralldom those who lay under a life-long fear of death" (Heb. 2:14-15, Moffatt). I have quoted Moffatt here as he properly translates the Greek word for "destroy," showing that it does not mean that Christ annihilates the devil by his atoning death, but rather that he crushed him and breaks his power over those who trust in Christ for salvation. Paul repeats this theme very often. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" is an expression found in Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14. "If we walk in the light," writes John, "as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Here "blood" is taken as representative of the whole atoning work of Christ which, in a figure, it is. In the Book of Revelation we read: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (1:5b). "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (5:9b). "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14b).

### THE MEANING OF THE ATONEMENT

The most able minds of the church have pondered for generations upon the meaning of the atonement -- what was it that



made Christ's death necessary? The Scriptures teach that Christ's death was a ransom but to whom? The ancient Greek fathers taught that Christ's death was a ransom to Satan. Satan had acquired a certain control over man and had brought him into bondage, and Christ was given by the Father as a ransom to Satan in order to buy the souls of men back to God. Gregory of Nyssa taught this theory in what was perhaps its crudest form, namely, that Christ was like the bait on a fishhook which Satan accepted, not being able to perceive the divinity of Christ hidden under the forms of his humiliation. Therefore Satan took hold of Christ, but he was not powerful enough to maintain Christ in his grasp. This theory has been regarded as impossible and absurd for perhaps a thousand years, but it has recently been revived in a modified form by Gustaf Aulen of the Theological School of Lund, Sweden. Aulen has professed to see in this old theory an approximation to the truth that man's state is self-contradictory, for although he has by a sad apostasy perverted himself into an abnormal condition under the devil's sway, he is nevertheless a creature of God who rightly belongs to God. Aulen thinks this old theory is an attempt to show that although the relationship between God and Satan is hostile, God would not use force in accomplishing his purpose. <sup>33</sup>

The theory that the death of Christ was a ransom to Satan held the field from the days of Origen, who died A.D. 254, until a new interpretation was made by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, who died A.D. 1109. Anselm taught that sin is debt (guilt) and that under the government of God it is absolutely necessary that this debt shall be paid, or that the penalty incurred by the guilt of sin shall be suffered either by the sinner or by a satisfactory substitute. This doctrine has become the orthodox interpretation of the universal church. The Council of Trent wrote: "Jesus Christ who, when we were enemies, merited justification for us by his most sacred passion on the tree and satisfied God the Father for us"; so holds the Roman Catholic Church and this view is re-echoed by the Lutheran Formula of Concord, the Heidelberg Catechism, the second Helvetic Confession, the Westminster Confession, and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. There have been a number of minor theories unnecessary to specify here. The most prominent orthodox digression from the Anselmic interpretation is that called the governmental theory, propounded by Hugo Grotius, who died 1645. Grotius taught that the law is the product of the divine will and the right to relax its demands at will belongs to God's prerogative of moral governor, but since the free remission of the penalty in the case of some sinners would weaken the motives restraining from disobedience the subjects of the divine government in general by affording an example of impunity, the benevolence of God requires that as a precondition of the forgiveness of any sinners he should furnish such an example of suffering in Christ as would exhibit his determination that sin shall not escape with impunity. This is called the governmental theory because it emphasizes the fact that the sufferings of Christ were not an exact substitute for the sinner but were made a moral equivalent in the divine system of government. This theory was carried over into the Arminian theology and was taken up by the Wesleyan theologians with modifications, the purpose being to avoid the conclusion of the Calvinists that if Christ died for any man that man would be saved regardless of anything which he might do. Wesleyan theologians sought to get away from such a mechanical theory. This doctrine has been thinned out by liberals into something like the moral theory of atonement. On the other hand, it can be interpreted in an orthodox manner as by the great Dutch theologian, Philip Limborch, who wrote: "The death of Christ is called a sacrifice for sin, but sacrifices are not payment of debt, nor are they full satisfactions for sins. But a gratuitous remission is granted when they are offered."

We do not regard it necessary to arouse further controversy on the subject by proposing any ingenious interpretation of the atonement. It is enough to leave it where the New Testament placed it and say that in some way, possibly beyond human understanding in this life, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

## CHRIST DIED FOR ALL MEN

Controversy over the doctrine of atonement has arisen from the difficulty of reconciling a universal atonement with the salvation of only a part of the human race. Those who believe in predestination have argued that if Christ suffered as a substitute for any soul, then that soul must be saved automatically and it is impossible that he should be lost. Nevertheless, according to the Christian teaching many souls are lost; therefore, say the orthodox Calvinists, it is obvious that Christ did not die for these souls else they would not, and could not, be lost. The reply which Arminian theologians make to this argument is that the death of Christ did not automatically insure the salvation of any given individuals, but it made salvation possible for every human being in all the history of the world because the benefit of Christ's atonement was retroactive from the day when he died on the cross, back through the long ages to the fall of Adam. This atonement had in fact been effective during all these years inasmuch as it had already been an accomplished fact in the purpose of God.



This doctrine -- that even though some are lost, all men may be saved through the atoning merits of Christ's death -- is taught so plainly in the Scriptures that the only way to avoid it is to deny the sincerity of these offers of salvation, which, of course, means to deny the truth of the Scriptures themselves. Following are some Scriptures which state in unequivocal language that the death of Christ was suffered in behalf of every human being that ever lived in this world: "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9b). "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2). "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all" (II Cor. 5:14b-15a). "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). "This is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (4:42). "As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18). "Who gave himself a ransom for all" (I Tim. 2:6).

Those who believe in universalism, or a second probation, have twisted these texts in order to prove that all men will be saved, regardless of their behavior in this life. Paul's language as translated by James Moffatt is very sweeping: "As one man's trespass issued in doom for all, so one man's act of redress issued in acquittal and life for all. Just as one man's disobedience made all the rest sinners, so one man's obedience will make all the rest righteous." Orthodox believers have been "put to it" in order to reconcile these statements with a whole regiment of texts which teach the eternal damnation of the finally impenitent.

The explanation is so simple it is a matter of wonder that any could miss it. First of all, it is true that all men are conditionally saved in Christ as infants. This is the sense in which this scripture is perfectly fulfilled in harmony with the texts which teach the doctrine of eternal punishment. That all men are conditionally saved in Christ as infants is a specific teaching of the Lord Jesus himself, who said: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14). They are passive under the atonement, and all men are invited to return to this state of childhood innocency by the call of the Lord Jesus: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

#### GOD INVITES ALL MEN TO ACCEPT SALVATION

Inasmuch as the conditions of salvation run so sharply against the sinful inclinations of mankind, nearly all gospel workers find it necessary to urge upon all men the necessity of seeking the Lord. Like Paul, they insist that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. It is certainly true, as Jesus himself has taught, that strait is the gate and narrow is the way that enters into life, and Christian teachers are justified in warning every man, and with tears as did Paul at Corinth. There is always, as is so often the case regarding other truths, a danger of putting the truth in a false light at this point by a misplaced emphasis. In other words, we must take great care to point out that the narrowness is in man's own sinful nature itself; it is not due to any lack of generosity in the divine call and provisions for man's salvation. In fact, the Scriptures teach that God is seeking man; that he is urging his salvation upon man; that he shines around man like the light of a summer sun and the only way anybody can be lost is to reject Christ, although in the blindness of sin that is, alas, far too easy to do. However much we may stress the urgency of the need of seeking God, we must never forget that in its deepest truth the fact is that God is seeking men, always and everywhere. The following texts serve to indicate that fact: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). "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" (22:17).

In this first text Christ presents himself as one who must be rejected in order to be avoided, and in the second he is represented as extending a universal welcome to all men. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:19-20). Both by his Spirit and through his people Christ pleads with men to accept forgiveness and reconciliation. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 45:22); "Ho, every one that trusteth, come ye to the waters" (55:1). "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest," says our Lord in Matthew 11:28. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come with me, and drink" (John 7:37). "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). And at the close of his earthly ministry our Lord said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every



creature" (Mark 16:15).

These texts prove clearly that the atonement of Christ is for all men. He paid the debt for every man. They show further that this privilege is offered graciously, freely, and urgently to all men.

## UNIVERSAL GRACE

The writer is a conservative Christian who sincerely confesses the solemn belief that multitudes of men will be eternally lost because they reject the mercy which is offered through Christ. This point is stressed in order to make clear the truth that the doom of the lost will not be because they could not find the way of salvation, but because they rejected it. Strictly speaking, it is not correct to say that God's grace is limited to only a few saintly souls; on the contrary, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

Even the ancient heathen realized that God was moving in their lives. This is beautifully brought out by Lactantius who quotes Cicero, the ancient Roman philosopher, as follows: "There is indeed a true law, right reason, agreeing with nature, diffused among all unchanging, everlasting, which calls to duty by commanding, deters from wrong by forbidding; which, however, neither commands nor forbids the good in vain, nor affects the wicked by commanding or forbidding. It is not allowable to alter the provisions of this law, nor is it permitted us to modify it, nor can it be entirely abrogated. Nor, truly, can we be released from this law, either by the senate or by the people; nor is another person to be sought to explain or interpret it. Nor will there be one law at Rome and another at Athens; one law at the present time, and another hereafter: but the same law, everlasting and unchangeable, will bind all nations at all times; and there will be one common Master and Ruler of all, even God, the framer, arbitrator, and proposer of this law; and he who shall not obey this will flee from himself, and, despising the nature of man, will suffer the greatest punishments through this very thing, even though he shall have escaped the other punishments which are supposed to exist."<sup>[34]</sup>

Lactantius was a Roman Christian writer who died in A.D. 330. And that Cicero, who died 43 B.C., here made a correct surmise about the nature of God, the revelation of himself by his Spirit on the hearts of all men, is confirmed by the words of Paul: "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2:14-15). It is the teaching of the old school of Christianity that a man cannot come to God for salvation merely in his own natural strength alone: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44); and the reason we cannot come to God by our own natural effort is because we are naturally weak and helpless.

Come, ye sinners poor and needy, Weak and wounded, sick and sore.

This is the teaching of Paul: "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (5:6). Therefore our salvation must come as a gift by the grace of God, for there is nothing we can do to merit it: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Paul speaks of the Word of God "which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (I Thess. 2:13d).

Augustine, who died in A.D. 430, wrote of the mysterious movement of this grace of God in the soul of man: Too late loved I Thee, O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! too late I loved Thee! And behold, Thou wert within, and I abroad, and there I searched for Thee; deformed I, plunging amid those fair forms which Thou hadst made. Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee. Things held me far from Thee, which, unless they were in Thee, were not at all. Thou calledst and shoutedst, and burstest my deafness. Thou flashedst, shonest, and scatteredst my blindness. Thou breathedst perfumes, and I draw in breath and pant for Thee. I tasted, and hunger and thirst Thou touchedst me, and I burned for Thy peace."<sup>[35]</sup>

But that our salvation is in the last instance dependent entirely upon the grace which God extends to us is taught by these scriptures: "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (II Thess. 2:13b). And to



repeat the text already given in another connection, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). This is offered to all humanity through the atonement, and in conformity with the general principles of Christian doctrine we must attribute this universal grace to the propitiatory work of the sacrifice of Christ. All that we have by way of grace and redemption comes to us as a favor through his atoning passion and death. Furthermore, this universal grace is given to all men and would work salvation in every human being that has ever lived if its offer were fully accepted. It would save every man, if he would yield to it. Men are lost because they reject this.

In the final analysis even the heathen are lost for this reason: "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). "Esau . . . sold his birthright" (Heb. 12:16); that is, it was something which he had and cast away, and thus it is by the rejection of Christ that men are lost. This explains and justifies the remark which evangelists sometimes make, "The greatest of all sins is to reject Christ," and that is because such a rejection is the fundamental basis of all sin.

In the prologue to the Gospel of John Jesus Christ is introduced as the pre-existent Word that was with God and was God from the beginning. Then the writer asserts that this Word "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). The manner of this lighting is discovered in the fifth verse: "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Goodspeed translates this: "The light is still shining in the darkness, for the darkness has never put it out."

Chrysostom, the greatest orator of the ancient church, who died in A.D. 407, made a beautiful comment on this passage: "If he enlightens every man coming into the world, how comes it that so many men remain without light? For all do not so much as acknowledge Christ. How then doth he enlighten every man? He illuminates indeed so far as in him is; but if any of their own accord, closing the eyes of their mind, will not direct their eyes unto the beams of this light, the cause that they remain in darkness is not from the nature of the light, but through their own malignity, who willingly have rendered themselves unworthy of so great a gift. But why believed they not? Because they would not: Christ did his part." <sup>[36]</sup>

Ambrose, a father of the Latin church, who died in A.D. 397, wrote: "The mystical Sun of Righteousness is arisen to all; he came to all; he suffered for all; and rose again for all: and therefore he suffered, that he might take away the sin of the world. But if any one believe not in Christ, he robs himself of this general benefit, even as if one by closing the windows should hold out the sunbeams. The sun is not therefore not arisen to all, because such a one hath so robbed himself of its heat: but the sun keeps its prerogative; it is such a one's imprudence that he shuts himself out from the common benefit of the light." <sup>[37]</sup>

Everybody knows that the Song of Solomon is a book commonly regarded as hard to understand. Modern negative criticism has seen in this book merely a human love lyric, but the devout thought of the church has throughout all ages understood this book to be a dramatic story of the wooing of the soul by its eternal Lover. It is not unreasonable to believe that the Song of Solomon is to be understood as expressing the love of Christ for his church in general and as wooing the human soul privileged to become a member of that church. We choose to follow the age-old voice of Christian tradition in accepting this interpretation, for to do so is to honor the Scriptures while to count this book a mere story of human love is to degrade its message. Viewed in this light, then, let us see how this great spiritual poem portrays the wooing of the soul by Christ who comes seeking it.

The soul is speaking:

"I slept, but my heart lay waking;  
I dreamed -- Ah! there is my darling knocking!

Then Christ speaks:

"Open to me, my own," he calls, "my dear, my dove, my paragon! My head is drenched with dew, my hair with drops of the night."

This seems a good description of Christ's passion in the Garden of Gethsemane.



Then the soul makes its excuses:

"But I have doffed my robe;  
why should I don it?  
My feet are bathed;  
why should I soil them?"  
Then my darling put his hand in,  
his right hand at the door,  
and my heart yearned for him;  
how my soul fainted when I heard him!  
So I rose to let my darling in,  
my hands all moist with myrrh,  
my finger wet with liquid myrrh,  
that dripped on the catch of the bolt.  
I opened to my darling,  
but, my darling, he had gone;  
I sought him, but I could not find him,  
I called, he never answered.

-- Song of Sol. 5:2-6, Moffatt

This should not be taken to mean that people who really desire to be saved cannot any more be saved, for the very fact that they wish to be saved is proof that the Spirit of God is calling them. On the contrary, this is merely a poetical way of saying that when people tarry too long the Lord leaves them and they will be plunged into grief and despair although they will not have any true heart-hunger for God.

Augustine has described the way in which the soul's eternal Lover woos it from sin to grace with these words: "What is that which shines through me, and strikes my heart without injury, and I both shudder and burn? I shudder inasmuch as I am unlike it; and I burn inasmuch as I am like it. It is Wisdom itself that shines through me, clearing my cloudiness, which again overwhelms me, fainting from it, in the darkness and amount of my punishment. For my strength is brought down in need, so that I cannot endure my blessings, until Thou, O Lord, who hast been gracious to all mine iniquities, heal also all mine infirmities Let him that is able hear Thee discoursing within." <sup>[38]</sup>

## THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

By turning our minds back to the central theme of man's ideal relation to God we are reminded that love is the key to the Christian doctrine of salvation. God does love all men with a love like that of a mother. The Lord says: "Can a woman forget her infant, forget to pity her babe? Yet even were a mother to forget, never will I forget you" (Isa. 49:15, Moffatt). "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (66:13). "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3). I am aware that these verses were spoken directly to ancient Israel, but I believe they have a much wider meaning as referring to the ideal bond of love which it is the passionate purpose of God to restore in all mankind as far as is possible and consistent with the freedom of the human will. It is the breaking of this tie of love between man and God that occasions all the sin and misery of mankind; It is not quite accurate to say that this tie is broken by sin, for it is the breaking of it which constitutes the very meaning of Sin. If this be true, it is easy to see the path by which man must return to God. The whole world of man's life is filled with the gentle light of that eternal sun. Everywhere a man may look he will find the light contending against the darkness of this. sinful world.

We have tried to show that God is offering salvation to man all the time and everywhere, and actually in infancy he conditionally gave salvation to man, and as a consequence men are lost by rejecting Christ. There is no danger of making salvation too easy by presenting it in this its true scriptural light, because once a man's eyes have become opened by faith to see the realities of the eternal world he will be stricken with a consciousness of his misery and sin which will impel him to seek the Lord in deep sorrow of heart. We must bear in mind at the outset, however, that men everywhere are rejecting Christ; they are shutting their eyes against the light; they are barring the doors against the gracious Guest. Jesus explained



that this is done through the cares of the world. The seed of God is sown in the heart of man, but "he also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Or, as it is explained in another place, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word and it becometh unfruitful. Thus we see how things which are commonly regarded as innocent, harmless things the constant hum of the industry, enjoyment, pleasure, anxiety, and toil of everyday life, are allowed to engross all the attention, to fill all the mental sky of a person's life. Or, to change the figure, these things are allowed, like weeds and thorns, to grow up to such a point that the seed of the Word of God cannot grow good thoughts, good desires, a beginning conviction of sin, a yearning for God. All these are planted in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and choked out because the hearer of the Word does not give his own soul, and the claims of God and of eternity, even a fair chance to grow in his heart. That is one reason why God blesses sermons and songs. They are like small hoes which for a brief moment push aside the weeds and let the eternal sun shine upon the seed of the Word of God in the heart. But even when these are lacking that seed will yet grow if only it has an opportunity.

An illustration of this is seen in the case of men cast adrift on the sea. When they float for days away from newspapers, telephones, the day's business, and all the jokes and fun, frolic and diversions of earthly life, and there in the solemn silence and stillness face eternity one day after another, it often happens in this vacant place of the heart that the eternal seed of God springs up to bless their lives.

Most gospel preachers spend a great deal of time explaining the various steps of repentance, its degrees and its stages and its relation to faith. But when one remembers that man is lost because he has strayed from God's love he sees that the very first step back to that love, and therefore to a state of salvation, is faith. Repentance is simply one aspect of faith, for faith does not move very far until it makes repentance inevitable or dies in its failure to do so. The very moment a man begins to believe in God as his loving Father, at that moment he begins to see his own sinfulness and appalling need. That is the beginning of repentance.

At the beginning this faith is a gift from God, yet a gift which the sinner has the power to reject. If exercised, faith will lead him through all the experience of repentance and acceptance to the full knowledge of the grace of God and the full joy of eternal life. This is proved by the fact that repentance is definitely said to be a gift from God. When Peter described to the church in Jerusalem his experience in preaching to the household of Cornelius, "they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles GRANTED Repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). On another occasion Peter preached in Jerusalem concerning Jesus being exalted to "a Prince and a Savior, for TO GIVE REPENTANCE to Israel" (5:31). This is one of those good gifts which come down from above (Jas. 1:17).

Let us illustrate the relation of faith to repentance by a little story: In early pioneer days a certain innkeeper enriched himself by robbing his guests. To do this successfully he often thought it necessary to murder the guests. When his son grew up he wished to see the world and so departed from the old home place and traveled over the country for several years. Deciding to return home and wishing to surprise his parents, he allowed his beard to grow and otherwise disguised himself, expecting at the proper time to reveal himself to the joy of his parents. Since he was riding a fine horse, his father quickly formed a purpose to kill him, not knowing, of course, who he was. As this unknown son bent his bearded face down to the dark waters of a near-by spring his father stealthily leaned over him and stabbed a long knife into his heart from the back. The broken body of the helpless stranger was buried in a secret and unhonored grave for several days before associates of the father, talking over their foul business, unintentionally apprised him of the fact that the bearded young man was his own son. Then, of course, the sorrow of the father was great, but there was no consolation.

This true story seems to have all the elements of a parable: the father loved a certain idea of his son, held in memory and formal respect. It is evident, however, that he did not love the son in his own person because he killed his son. So there are millions today who love God and Christ merely as figments of the imagination; they love a form, an idea, a theory of God. Kierkegaard calls this imaginative idea of God simply a small "g" god. He says that a man must get rid of the small "g" god in order to truly love God.

But suppose we admit that the father really loved the son and did not recognize him. Suppose he had injured the son badly but not fatally, and that at that moment he had begun to believe that it was his own son. Can we not see what a great change this belief would bring over the man? Would he not at once begin to weep and be sorry for having injured his beloved son? Would he not ask his son's forgiveness piteously and helplessly, and would he not likewise do everything



within his power to make the wrong right and repair the injury he had done to his son? We can imagine the father tenderly carrying the boy to his home and humbling himself in every conceivable way in order to undo the wrong. This is the meaning of repentance. Theological writers have put it into technical form until the real heart emotion of the experience has been obscured by the mechanics of the idea. The soul has injured and offended God. Strange to say, it has done this both knowingly and unknowingly, just as this robber knew he was doing wrong when he stabbed the young man, but he did not know how extremely evil that act was. Every sinner in the world today knows more or less clearly that he is doing wrong, but no one living in willful sin has any true conception of the tragic enormity of his rebellion against God. Just as the belief on the part of the father that the wounded corpse was that of his own son produced sorrow and anguish in his own mind, likewise the belief on the part of any sinner that he has sinned against God will tend to produce sorrow, compunction, and all the elements of true repentance; That is, if the person who has begun to see all life in this world, and God and eternity, by the eye of faith will continue to look with this eye of faith he will see his sins so enormous that he will have no rest until he has received the assurance of forgiveness and salvation. The only other way he can deal with this situation -- prevent this repentance from growing into a complete forsaking of sin and acceptance of salvation -- is to shut his eye of faith and turn his heart again unto unbelief, thus rejecting Christ and salvation at the moment he rejects sorrow for his sins.

Unbelief is such a terrible sin because it makes all other sins possible. Thus we read: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). Unbelief blinds the eyes to the vision of God and dims the reality of those spiritual things which make repentance and salvation real, objective experiences of life rather than figments of the imagination, for "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (11:6).

Repentance, then, is the human response to the conviction wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the sinner. "When he comes, he will convict the world, convincing men of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in me" (John 16:8-9, Moffatt). When by faith the sinner sees the wounds he has made in the body of his Beloved, if he continues his gaze of faith the result must be (1) contrition: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). Such an one has the humble and meek attitude described by Christ: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:34). (2) This contrition naturally induces a sense of sorrow towards God. The Authorized Version calls it a "godly sorrow," but in the original it is a "sorrow toward God." Moffatt translates it "the pain God is allowed to guide ends in a saving repentance never to be regretted, whereas the world's pain ends in death. See what this pain divine has done for you, how serious it has made you, how keen to clear yourselves, how indignant, how alarmed" (II Cor. 7:10-11). Here is made very clear the distinction between genuine repentance and mere remorse of conscience -- sorrow because the offender has been caught and must suffer the penalty. Sorrow towards God is a sorrow that sees sin as an offense against God and is genuinely sorry that it ever happened. This, of course, implies a sincere purpose of amendment of life: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). To the lame man who was healed Christ said: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 33:15-16).

These few texts indicate the entire tenor of Scripture: repentance has no meaning until it has developed into a sincere, resolute purpose to amend the life by the grace of God. This fact alone will show us the shallowness of much modern religion. It is a popular belief that repentance means being sorry with the understanding that, of course, sin is inevitable and one is sure to drift back into it again. According to Scripture, this is not true repentance. There is never any true repentance until there is a sincere resolution to give up sin by the grace of God. And this is a valid test of the reality of repentance.

Sometimes penitents do not know whether their sorrow has been deep enough, whether they have shed enough tears, whether they have lingered in the shadows of godly sorrow long enough. To these the answer is that there is a spiritual instrument which gauges this process with finest accuracy. Any person who is sorry enough to quit sin in general, including the particular sin which troubles him, that person is truly penitent and need have no fear regarding the depth of his sorrow for sin.



While we have no sympathy with a purely mechanical, mathematical conception of repentance, nevertheless it is wise to form a clear picture of what is involved in repentance. One of the most important of these elements is forgiving our enemies and becoming reconciled to all mankind. This is an implication of the very nature of the love commandment which requires first, love to God, and then love to man. The Apostle says: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20). The same writer says also: "He that hateth his brother is in darkness" (2:11). Jesus laid reconciliation with our fellow man at the very beginning of the life of faith. Referring to the old Jewish law regarding sacrificing for the forgiveness of sin, he taught that when one brings his gift to the altar to pray for forgiveness "and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). Since the Jewish altar has long since passed away, it is not necessary to take this literally, and it does not necessarily mean that a man should postpone seeking salvation until he has traversed the earth and come into physical contact with his enemy for the purpose of reconciliation. The spirit of this verse is carried out when a man at the altar seeking salvation forms a resolute purpose in his heart that he will, so far as lies within him, become reconciled to his enemy regardless of whose fault may have caused that enmity.

Christ taught reconciliation in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," or in the other form of the prayer: "As we forgive those who trespass against us." In other words, that prayer is literally a prayer for condemnation unless we are willing to forgive our enemies. Christ repeated this lesson in the story of a debtor who owed \$10,000,000 (Goodspeed), but who after he was released violently assailed a fellow servant who owed him only \$20 (Matt. 18:23-35). If God is willing to forgive us so much, we must be willing to forgive the lesser offenses of our fellow men. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15). This is the acid test of repentance. The man who is truly brokenhearted over his sins will make every possible effort to make his wrongs right. He will restore what he has stolen and robbed; he will admit generously wherein he has acted against love in his relations with his fellow men.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (I John 1:9). Perhaps the first step in this confession is confession to one's self. This is a step which is practically impossible to the natural man. It can only be done by yielding to the entreaty of the Spirit of God. It is as natural for men to justify all of their actions and all of their wrong behavior as it is to do these sinful things in the first place. It is the preliminary work of the Spirit of God in convicting of sin to enable the sinner to acknowledge to himself that he has done wrong. Then he can and will confess it to God, and under certain circumstances to his fellow men, particularly wherein he has injured any person directly. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Walter Marshall Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology*, p. 159

<sup>34</sup> Lactantius, *The Divine Institute*, chap. 8

<sup>35</sup> *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Book X

<sup>36</sup> Chrysostom, *Commentary on John*, Homily VIII

<sup>37</sup> Ambrose, *On Psalm 118*, "Sermon 8"

<sup>38</sup> *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Book XI



# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

## Chapter 5

### THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION

#### ANTECEDENT GRACE

If the sentence against Adam had been carried out promptly with sharp rigor, then his wife and he would have died almost instantaneously. This is the logical implication of the sentence: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Moreover, it is wholly in accordance with our moral judgment to insist that if there were nothing else than penalty in the mind of God, then it were contrary to God's mercy to permit a race of doomed and lost men to perpetuate themselves under an everlasting curse of sin. It is at this place that the atonement comes in. To the serpent in the presence of Adam the promise is made that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Thus it was that the atonement was interposed to suspend the immediate penalty of Adam's sin and to launch the race of mankind upon a new probation.

Man entered the first probation unfettered by any nature of sin, but was pure and holy so far as his nature was concerned. He was created in God's image. It would seem that the new probation, therefore, placed man at a disadvantage due to the fact that all men are now born with a nature of sin. However, it is the universal teaching of nearly all the great Christian communions that this disadvantage of being born with the nature of sin is offset in man's favor by the universal grace of God given to all mankind through the atonement, which seeks every man out, woos him to righteousness, and makes his moral failure -- if he fails -- a result of his rejecting the offer of the grace of God.

This grace which is offered to all men at the very beginning of their conscious moral life is commonly called prevenient grace by technical theologians. A very good definition of this universal grace is given by the fathers of the Council of Trent, the great Roman Catholic Council of the sixteenth century which fixed the doctrines of that church for all time since. The doctrine is stated in the following decree: "The Synod furthermore declares, that, in adults, the beginning of the said Justification is to be derived from the prevenient grace of God, through Jesus Christ, that is to say, from his vocation, whereby, without any merits existing on their parts, they are called; that so they, who by sins were alienated from God, may be disposed through his quickening and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and co-operating with that said grace: in such sort that, while God touches the heart of man by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, neither is man himself utterly inactive while he receives that inspiration, forasmuch as he is also able to reject it; yet is he not able, by his own free will, without the grace of God, to move himself unto justice in his sight. <sup>[39]</sup>

Protestant creeds generally agree with this statement of the doctrine with the exception that the old Calvinistic creed restricted the antecedent grace of God to "the elect," at least insofar as its effectual working was concerned. The language of the Council of Trent differs somewhat from the ordinary phraseology of Protestant Christians, but unless we are merely seeking to debate about words I think practically all Christians can agree on the general idea there expressed. Men are saved because the antecedent grace of God seeks them out and presents salvation to them. They have the power to reject or accept it.

#### FAITH FOR SALVATION

It is impossible to make a sharp distinction between repentance and faith on the part of an unsaved person, for the kind of faith that saves is only another aspect of repentance. Repentance and faith are simply two sides of one attitude of the heart. The nature of God being what it is, supremely holy and utterly abhorring sin, it is impossible for a sinner intellectually and



sincerely to believe that God smiles on him while he is continuing in any known sin. Moreover, it should be emphasized that this penitent attitude toward sin, hating it, fleeing from it, rejecting it, is in a sense what many Christians fail to realize, a lifelong attitude of a Christian believer. He is saved from his sorrow and grief in a sense of alienation from God, but he is not saved from a continuous abhorrence of and opposition to sin. There is no true faith in the scriptural sense without an accompanying abhorrence of sin. In the convicted sinner this abhorrence of sin is given almost wholly to a backward look and a negative attitude toward the evil of the past life. After a person is converted, the shame and grief of his sin is healed in the joy of the grace of God and his faith takes a forward look toward the positive and creative possibilities of a life of fellowship with God. This fact has concealed from many Christians the knowledge that they are yet of necessity in an attitude of repentance throughout their whole life insofar as their rejection of sin is concerned, and that is the primary quality of repentance.

But faith in the seeker is not wholly concerned with repentance. Rapidly, in conformity with its strength, it turns its eyes, trustfully expecting the grace of pardon and the joy of salvation. It is the clear teaching of the New Testament emphasized by most Protestant creeds that salvation is obtained only by faith, and that is certainly the truth if we remember that repentance is an essential part of faith. But what is the faith that saves, and how does it save?

Too much of our teaching on faith is concerned with minor and marginal aspects of the doctrine. Literally millions of hours of speaking have been done and millions of pages of written exposition have been put forth stressing faith as believing certain doctrines or certain facts. This is undoubtedly one aspect of faith, but it has been caricatured by unbelievers to create the impression that the church is constantly asking people to believe certain statements and theories regardless of whether they are true or not. "Open your mouth and shut your eyes and I'll give you something to make you wise" is the way this truth is perverted.

No one believes more strongly than we that there are certain historic facts about Christ and certain doctrinal interpretations of these facts which it is essential to understand and believe. Nevertheless, the essential faith which saves is something even more radical than this. The faith that saves is trust in a person, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We honor all the labor of scholars who assemble cogent proofs of the truths of the Bible from the fields of archaeology, philosophy, and science, but we must insist that the faith that saves is a gift granted by the Spirit of God. The antecedent or prevenient grace of which we have written carries with it the preliminary gift of repentance. We believe the message of the gospel, the truth of the Bible, because we believe God, even though we are immeasurably assisted in developing our faith in God through the revelation of the truths of his written Word. These two aspects of faith are not exclusive, but they work together. It is likely that some minds approach through one avenue of faith and others through another. But for me, at least, there is nothing which illuminates the problems of religion like contemplation of the relation of man to God as that of person to Person.

Faith is a phase of love. It is true one can have faith in a fact or in several facts without feeling any love for them, but faith in a person implies a certain amount of love. In thinking of this one asks, Is it not true that sometimes parents love grown children who are so wicked and depraved that these parents do not trust them completely? Do not Christians love all men and yet find themselves unable to trust people whom they know to be deceitful and given to fraud? These things are true, but it cannot be denied that such lack of faith in any given person constitutes a hindrance to love. And perfect love would be a love absolutely without doubt. If a father has a son so wicked and depraved that he cannot trust him, and if later an improvement in the character of the son takes place so that the father can, with good reasons, trust him more fully, no one can deny that this development would mean an increase of love on the part of the father. Suspicion and unbelief are barriers to love.

Faith is an expectation of benevolent behavior from another person. When two strangers meet, if one suspects that the other will try to cut his throat this mistrust will create ill will and resentment. A baby learns to love its mother, not because they are related by blood, as many imagine, but solely because the mother gives the baby pleasure by her kindly ministrations. Gradually the child comes to recognize that the source of this pleasure is the mother, and therefore it comes to love the mother. In exactly the same proportions it comes to have confidence in her, to expect good from her, and consolation in grief and sorrow, relief from pain, entertainment to avoid boredom, food for its hunger, and a display of affection which the faith and love of the child has learned to enjoy. Transfer these things to the spiritual realm and we see the meaning of the text, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently



seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Faith in a person is confidence in his character. A child was deserted by its mother after it was old enough to understand and remember. This child was adopted by an earnest, worthy Christian woman who loved it and cherished it tenderly, but the grave wrong which had been done it by its own mother wounded its mind very deeply. When the child would be playing in the yard it would suddenly stop, run in and look up piteously into the face of its foster mother, and say, "Mother, you are not going to run off and leave me as my other mother did, are you?"

The faith of a Christian is founded on a trustworthy character. It is the Character known and trusted by Paul, and of whom he said: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). It is this which gives Christians a firm faith in the Bible and in the promises of God. It also gives them faith in the principles or doctrines of the Christian religion because the truth of these things depends upon the character of a faithful God.

Faith in a person makes one rely upon his promises. At any time there are always multitudes of men and women who can only find peace and fortitude to endure the pain of separation from those they love by relying upon the promises of faithfulness and devotion these loved ones have made at the time of parting. Homesick men and lonely women do not have to read books on psychology to understand the meaning of faith. They know that when they trust the absent one fully they find peace. If for any reason enough doubts come to tantalize them too much, something breaks and love is gone. Why is it so hard for people to understand that this is a parable of the love that constrains us as strangers and pilgrims in this troubled world? (I Pet 2:11). So long as their faith holds good, love continues to remain in their hearts.

These thoughts will enable us to understand that faith in God is not simply a strained effort to believe something without regard to its truth or to accept doctrine contrary to reason. It is firm confidence in, reliance upon, and trust in, God. This is the faith that saves.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10). Here it is taught that no mere assent to the historic creeds will suffice. This is a heart-felt experience, or it is nothing. Nevertheless, the man who believeth in his heart shall be saved. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). Thus we see that justification is the result of believing in him who forgives sins. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:20-28).

It would clarify our exposition if space permitted the discussion of the theory of salvation by meritorious works. Some have even asserted that faith is a meritorious work by means of which salvation is obtained. It is easy to see, however, that faith is not a meritorious work of any kind. It corresponds to the behavior of a wounded soldier on the battlefield who is sought out, found, treated, and carried away by the stretcher bearers. The man has done simply nothing to merit or earn their care, judged merely by the single event itself. He receives rescue, redemption, deliverance, escape, and successful treatment of his wounds all as a gift without paying a cent or doing anything to obtain them. He merely accepts the offer. That is a parable of the plan of salvation, for "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16). "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (3:6-7).

If this faith seems too easy, it must be remembered that it follows a contrite and heartbroken repentance and confession of



sin. To the man or woman who thus repents of sin and forsakes it from the heart, faith is not a hard task.

Still, we must insist that faith is not the mere acceptance of some historical fact, even though it be a fact as sublime as the life and death of Jesus. The faith which justifies is a faith which submits itself fully to Jesus Christ as a person, and looking longingly into his face, and praying earnestly, believes that God for Christ's sake forgives the seeker now of all his past sins.

Many years ago a brilliant and consecrated young Indian man, A. D. Khan, came to America from India, and during his stay here a certain young American man became so inspired and fascinated by Brother Khan's personality and message that he felt a burning desire to accompany this wonderful saint and scholar to India to do missionary work there. This young man did not even dare to ask for such an honor. Another young man was chosen, however, to accompany Brother Khan, and from the moment of his election he seemed to belong to India.

This reminds us of the person who chooses Christ and is accepted of him. Though that person is still on this earth in the flesh, he already belongs to heaven. Such a person need have no fear of death for he goes abroad to that strange land accompanied by his dearest and best Friend. Christ is the bridge from earth to heaven, and the man who is in Christ has now passed beyond the terrors and the fear of death in proportion as his faith claims victory.

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39 Council of Trent, Sixth Session, Decree on Justification, chap. 5



# The Meaning of Salvation

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## Chapter 6

### THE FIRST CRISIS OF REDEMPTION

Naturalistic interpretations of religion tend to stress the gradual nature of the work of grace in the life of man. This has a great show of rationality as we can easily see that the operations of the laws of nature are gradual in their process. But believers in spiritual religion stress the crisis experiences of the human soul for the very reason that herein most especially does the life of mankind differ from the necessary course of nature. It is this difference which naturalistic teachers seek to obscure and explain away, whereas those who believe in a personal God and in the unique character of the human soul, its freedom and its special personal relationship to God, must emphasize crisis experiences in religion as being most consistent with the spiritual nature of man.

We believe it is possible to defend the idea that there are no crises in nature. The things which seem like crises are not such, strictly speaking, but merely analogies of the crises of human life. One might argue that an explosion which fires a gun, for example, is a real example of crisis in the natural world. Before the explosion all the factors involved are perfectly at rest, without any tension whatsoever. An old loaded cartridge will lie unchanged for a whole lifetime and then explode suddenly if properly handled. Is not that explosion a true example of crisis? To this the answer is, no. All the factors which contributed to the explosion, except the trivial shock which set it off, were in a perfectly orderly arrangement and each element did exactly what the laws of nature indicated, at the very instant that the spark touched them. There was no creative moment of choice; there was only the orderly fulfillment of the inexorable law. This is not a crisis; it is simply the analogy of a crisis, such as can happen only in the soul of a human being.

Take, for example, the crisis in the life of a man who becomes a murderer. Previous to the decisive act there arises a tremendous tension of emotion in the mind of the man who regards himself as having suffered injury or as being exposed to such a danger. Instead of having only one choice like the elements in the gunpowder, he has a number of choices besides that of doing murder. In the tension of the moment, murder is the choice he makes. This is the meaning of crisis: that at one dramatic moment in a man's life he will make a choice for evil or for good, or perhaps even a choice in temporal matters involving no moral element, but a choice which must inevitably mold all his future and impose limitations on all his later range of choices.

Think of a few of these crises in the natural life of a man: the decision to go to college, the decision to follow a certain trade or profession, the decision to marry a certain person. In addition to these, there are certain moral crises in the life of men. There is the decisive step when a man decides to give up drinking or when a trusted employee decides to resist or to yield to temptation to dishonesty. No one can deny that such crises as these make and shape the destiny of men. We contend that it is as unlikely that a man should be saved and become a Christian without experiencing a crisis in his life as that a man should enter the bonds of matrimony without passing through any life crisis. We grant that some people may accept the state of matrimony with such complete assent of the mind that they are perhaps not conscious of any emotional tension, but that is not the point. Such an experience is a crisis, regardless of the state of one's mind.

#### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

The crisis which ushers a man into the state of Salvation is only one single experience entered into by the whole man, but to change the figure, it might be thought of as a great palace with many different approaches. The palace cannot fully be understood without viewing each of its different sides. Likewise, in religious language the experience of salvation is called "justification by faith," "forgiveness of sins," "conversion, regeneration," "adoption," "redemption," and possibly by other names, depending upon the viewpoint which one takes in studying its nature. It is important to remember that these are not



several gifts of God which come to us through different doors of our heart, but they are many phases of one experience of the grace of God, instantaneously bestowed in the supreme crisis of human life.

Justification by faith describes the legal, or judicial, side of the change which happens to a man when his sins are forgiven. It is the change which takes place in the mind of God as judge, by which a man's sins are pardoned and he is no longer accounted a sinner. This is what it means to be justified by faith and have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe . . . being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:21-28).

The law is holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12). If it were possible for any man to keep it in his natural state, that fact would be a complete justification for that man, but it is the unyielding contention of Paul and of the other New Testament writers that in his own natural strength no man can keep this law. Therefore the righteousness of the law can never avail to justify any man. "To him that worketh not," says Paul, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness' (Rom. 4:5). Then we read of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works (vs. 6). "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (vs. 8). "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (vss. 23-24).

This doctrine of imputation here and elsewhere in the Roman letter has been taken to mean that Christ's personal righteousness is imputed to us. This is of a piece with the theory that the guilt of Adam's sin has been transferred to the whole race. Such ideas revolt the conscience of modern men; to think that an unborn child should be guilty of a sin which Adam committed is an impossible strain on the minds of most intelligent men. To "impute" means to account or reckon. Men often make mistakes in their reckoning, but God never reckons anything to be so, nor accounts anything to be true, unless it is really true. There are three forms of imputation in the Epistle to the Romans. There is first the imputation of the consequences of Adam's sins upon the human race; second, the imputation of the consequences and penalty of the sin of the human race upon Christ; and third, the imputation of the consequences of Christ's atoning passion upon all that believe. It is important to distinguish the difference between the penalty and the consequences. A man may be a quarrelsome, brawling person. In a fight he gets his hand injured for life. For that brawl the judge sentences him to jail for six months. The jail sentence is a penalty for that sin and the life-long crippling of his hand is a consequence of that sin. The judge could suspend the penalty, but he could not suspend the consequences. Because the man has lost the use of one hand he is impoverished; his children grow up in a poverty-stricken neighborhood, lacking many advantages. All these are consequences of that one sin. His children do not bear the guilt of that sin, but they do suffer the consequences, and such was the result of the sin of Adam upon the human race. To deny that good people can suffer the consequences of the wrongdoing of evil people, although not their guilt, is to deny what our eyes witness every day: the suffering of the innocent, because of the evildoing of the wicked, such as that of parents or children or near relatives.

Justification is not, therefore, the imputation of the personal righteousness of Christ any more than the imputation of Adam's sin to mankind is an imputation of the guilt of his transgression. The atonement of Christ redeems us from the consequences of Adam's sin and from the guilt of our own. Its benefits are imputed to us when we trust in God's saving grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness of sins is only another description of justification by faith. Paul delighted in exalting this glorious experience. Sometimes he describes it as "being united with Christ" in his death and in his resurrection. (See the sixth chapter of Romans.) The mystical union of the Christian with Christ must not be thought of as an identification of our person with his. This is the teaching of classical mysticism. It would mean the destruction of human personality. Paul makes his meaning clear when in another case he describes marriage as creating a unity of the persons married (Eph. 5:31). We all know that the husband and wife do not lose their personalities. As long as they live, and throughout eternity, each will be a separate individual. Nevertheless, they do experience a peculiar state of unity, requiring perfect faith and love for its ideal fulfillment. In the same chapter Paul describes our union with Christ as being analogous to that of a husband and wife to each other. Elsewhere the Apostle writes of "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30). By his indwelling grace Christ imparts the spiritual fruits of his own



supernatural life. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23a). Undoubtedly these are the result of the indwelling Christ, who dwells in the heart by faith (Eph. 3:17). We assert as strongly as possible the necessity and reality of this impartation of spiritual life to the soul. What we deny is that Christ's personal righteousness becomes a substitute for holy living and godly behavior in the saints. The righteousness of Christ which is thus imputed to them is the effect of Christ's atoning passion granted to them as a gift on condition of faith.

The old-time Wesleyan preachers taught that there were four types of justification, each restricted to a definite period of a man's life. "In considering this subject," writes Bishop S. M. Merrill, "we must remember that there are several distinct justifications taught in the Scriptures. The first is the 'free gift,' which, through the righteousness of one, 'came upon all men unto justification of life.' This is generally called the initial or infantile justification as it includes the entire human family, placing them in a state of freedom from condemnation and starting them in life exempt from liability to punishment, either for the sin of Adam or for their own inherited evil nature. The second is the justification of the sinner in the sense of pardon and personal acceptance. This is the justification in question, which is by faith only. The third is the justification of the righteous, in the sense of approval. This is by works, or obedience as a result of a living faith. The fourth has respect to the transactions of the day of judgment. At that time men will be justified or condemned according to their works. The reason of this final justification of the righteous will not be found in themselves, but in the Savior as its source; nevertheless, the decision will be according to the deeds done in the body, or upon the testimony of works as the fruit of faith."<sup>[40]</sup> This distinction may be useful to some by helping to explain a multitude of texts dealing with the various aspects of justification if we bear in mind that for the sinner seeking Christ there is no justification except justification by faith as a free and unmerited pardon granted as a gift from God.

## THE CONDITIONAL JUSTIFICATION OF CHILDREN

It is the teaching of the New Testament that the atonement of Christ was made on behalf of all men: "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18).

It is perfectly proper to ask what this atonement means in the case of infants. Christ said of little children that "of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14); "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (18:3). Nevertheless, as we have shown elsewhere, complete justification is everywhere offered on the term of voluntary acceptance by faith. Men are exhorted to seek for it as for a hidden treasure. They are required to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). Inasmuch as little children cannot meet these requirements, the question arises as to their standing under the atonement.

We believe that all infants are conditionally justified under the atonement. That is, they are offered justification on condition that they accept it in accordance with its normal obligations as soon as they reach the age of accountability. However, if they die before reaching that age the benefits of the atonement, including regeneration, justification, and entire sanctification, fall to them as a gift of the grace of God which they have never rejected and which they receive because they die passive under the atonement. To say that infants are fully justified and regenerated merely by reason of the fact that they are infants is just as unreasonable as to say that they are wholly sanctified for the same reason. Nobody teaches that children are wholly sanctified by reason of their infantile innocence, and by the same reasoning we dare not say that they are justified and regenerated in the complete, definite sense of adult believers. But they are conditionally justified under the grace of the atonement so that they will receive the full benefits of that atonement if they die passive under the atonement without ever rejecting it. If they live, however, to exercise their option they must accept justification, regeneration and entire sanctification voluntarily, under the terms of the gospel, if they are ever consciously to enjoy the full privileges of this expression of the grace of God. They are like the heirs under a conditional will containing the option of a choice when they reach the legal age. No one can foresee what option these heirs will choose. They may even reject the will entirely, but until they come of an age to choose their option they are heirs under the will.

## REGENERATION

The term "justification" refers to something outward or objective which is done for man by the judicial sentence of pardon



for remission of his sins, while "regeneration" refers to the corresponding work of grace by which his heart is changed. It is the consistent teaching of Scripture and the well-nigh universal belief of the representative teachers of Christianity that sin exists in two forms: as acts of disobedience on the one hand and as a state of nonconformity to God's ideal and perfect will on the other. In the very nature of the case this distinction is bound to make confusion in the thinking of the uninstructed and the careless. Nevertheless, no intelligent person can ponder the matter very long without seeing that there is indeed a connection and yet a difference between sinful acts and a tendency to sin. It is at this point that this confusion arises over the formation of a definition of regeneration. Many theologians define regeneration in such a way as to include entire sanctification, although most of them concede, and even assert, that regeneration is not the completion of entire sanctification and at the best cannot be more than the beginning of that experience. If we lower the standard of regeneration too far we shall make the mistake of confusing the church and the world. Nevertheless, if we raise it too high we shall find that we are describing a state of entire sanctification, which the experience of regenerated believers and the teaching of the Word of God will not sustain. "With respect to regeneration," writes Dr. R. H. Foster, "that is a work done in us, in the way of changing our inward nature; a work by which a spiritual life is unused into the soul, whereby he (the regenerate) brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, has victory over sin, is enabled to resist corrupt tendencies, and has peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; a radical change by which the preponderating tendencies of the soul are turned toward God, whereas they were previously turned from him -- by which the love of sin is destroyed, its dominion broken, and a desire and relish for and longing after holiness implanted." <sup>[41]</sup>

"We have said that each transgression of the law of God, on the part of a responsible moral agent, both condemns and pollutes his soul. No doubt of this truth has ever been expressed by any intelligent Christian. Each sinner is responsible for the guilt and pollution thus brought on himself. God cannot approve him as his child till both the one and the other are swept away by atoning blood. It is therefore quite as important that the pollution of his sins should be cleansed, as their guilt should be forgiven. The internal cleansing is the counterpart of pardon from without, and one is just as perfect as the other. To illustrate: if a sinner has committed just forty thousand sins, he is responsible to God for the guilt and pollution of just forty thousand sins; no more, no less. In the act of pardon, the guilt of forty thousand sins is completely forgiven; no more -- no less. In the cleansing work of regeneration the pollution of just forty thousand sins is completely washed away; no more, no less. The work of pardon is, therefore, infinite in its application to past sins; and the work of cleansing equally." <sup>[42]</sup>

Sometimes the doctrine of regeneration is so interpreted as to signify that the very structure and existence of the soul is annihilated and the man's existence as a human being begins all over again. To press these figures of speech to such an extreme is to deny other truths fully as important. If God annihilates the man who was a sinner in the experience of regeneration, why might he not annihilate other men without starting them over again? Undoubtedly spiritual truth must always be understood by the medium of parables or figures of speech. To strain them to a point of absurdity by making them literal is to destroy their spiritual meaning. That is what Christ's hearers did when they rejected his teachings because they thought he meant that they were to turn cannibals and eat his physical flesh with their literal teeth (John 6:35-66). This same obstacle stumbled Nicodemus in regard to the very question we are discussing, namely, being born again. Nicodemus took it literally, as we are in danger of doing. Nearly all the leading authorities describe this experience of regeneration as being an impartation of divine life to the soul, and this is in harmony with the Scriptures. Probably evangelical Christians have focused the most of their attention upon Christ's famous figure of the new birth in his teaching to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). And this is an important scripture to remember in all teaching concerning regeneration.

It is, however, just as important to remember that regeneration is often described as a reception by the soul of something imparted or implanted by God. The famous Parable of the Sower in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew is an illustration of this truth. The soil receives the seed, which grows because it is hospitably received. This is the "engrafted word, which is able to save your soul" (Jas. 1:21). "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). It is Christ formed in you (Gal. 4:19). This is what it means to become partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). Paul exhorts us to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). And he says that the Colossians have put on the new man (Col. 3:10). It is an experience in which we who were dead in sin are quickened together with Christ (Eph. 2:5). "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). "I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jer. 24:7). These are all examples of an implantation of grace or blessing into the being of the man. The same thought is borne out in the following



verse: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:33-34). "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes ... and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 11:19-20).

We believe these instances are sufficient to show that it is not contrary to the tenor of Scripture to describe regeneration as an impartation of a new life into the soul. Bearing this thought in mind, we turn to other figures describing this tremendous crisis which changes a worldly person into a child of God. Christ said: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). John explains: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13). Christ described this as the birth of the Spirit (3:3-7). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet 1:3).

## ADOPTION

While the other writers of the New Testament frequently describe the new life of salvation under the figure of a new birth, Paul uses that expression only once: "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). Many writers refer this to baptism, but having in mind the Jewish background of the Apostle Paul it is evident that he was thinking of the laver which stood at the door of the Tabernacle (Exod. 40:7), between the Tabernacle and the altar (30:18). Undoubtedly Paul meant to connect this laver of cleansing with the altar where sacrifice was made for sin. The Tabernacle was a type of the church and all Christians are priests (I Pet. 2:5-9), but no priest could enter the Tabernacle until he had first passed the altar and washed in the laver (Exod. 30:20): "When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not."

Paul, being enamored of his Roman citizenship, illustrates regeneration by the figure of adoption, as adoption was a common ceremony under Roman law. It is likely that his own family came into Roman citizenship by that process, therefore he writes to the Roman Christians: "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:15). God hath sent forth his son "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:5-7).

This adoption was not a mere casual thought in the mind of God, but a deep purpose running through eternity: "He has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself" (Eph. 1:4-5). It is the firm conviction of all Wesleyan theologians that this predestination is the predetermined purpose of God to have a people, likewise his purpose to present the gospel for acceptance or rejection by whosoever will. It is an election of opportunity, and not an election of unreasoning fate. This adoption is the admission of those who were strangers and foreigners into the full rights and privileges of the sons of God. It takes those who were children of their father, the devil, and transfers them into the kingdom of God's dear Son and makes them no longer "strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

## THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

In all his dealings with the churches of his time, Paul never prays for the forgiveness of their sins; he constantly assumes that the Christians to whom he writes are saved from sin and that they are fully assured and clearly conscious of that fact. These Christians "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:15-16). This is a conviction created in the heart by the Holy Spirit, assuring the soul of forgiveness and acceptance with God. For he has "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). This assurance is experienced because "we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Freedom from bondage and freedom from fear are marks of the indwelling power of the Spirit which gives the assurance



of salvation. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (I John 5:10). This is the Spirit that beareth witness. In addition to the witness of God's Spirit, there is the witness of our own spirit. "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (I John 3:19-21). The Apostle Paul knew himself to be clear in his conscience for "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience" (II Cor. 1:12). And again he says: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also, bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 9:1).

Part of the witness of our own spirit is the peace of God: "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1). We have the kingdom of God within us (Luke 17:21). And, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (15:13). "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). On account of these things," we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

It must be remembered that these spiritual privileges are enjoyed in different degrees by every Christian. That is to say, the witness of the Spirit is the same to all just as the sun is the same to all, but as some people have better eyesight to benefit by the light of the sun, so some Christians are more spiritual and thus better able to appropriate these privileges of the assurance of salvation.

It would be a pity if this doctrine, meant to sustain and comfort the hearts of the saints, should be misinterpreted so as to become a burden instead of a consolation. This gracious witness of the Spirit should not be confused with the varying and changing tides of human emotion. As the poet has said:

The tides of emotion may dim as they will,  
The Son and the Father abide with me still  
I dare not confide in a rapturous  
frame, But trust in the promise, forever the same.

And an unshaken faith is the prime necessity for the making of this promise fruitful to the soul.

## THE CHRISTIAN IS SAVED FROM SIN

If Christians used the same common sense in discussing salvation that they use in talking about other things, there never could arise the question, What is the thing from which a saved person is saved? and yet, strange as it may seem, the vast mass of Christians, both lay people and teachers, regard it as a closed question. Saved people are not saved from anything, according to the popular belief. In any case, they are not saved from sin, because it is said that all men sin. And one might even say that Christians sin worse than other men because they have more light and more privileges. They are more sensitive to the light against which they constantly sin. So we have the strange paradox which maintains that the better Christian the man is, the bigger sinner he will think himself to be. And they tell us that the greatest saint of the New Testament was Paul, who confessed himself "the chief of sinners." This is not the kind of paradox often found in the Bible which represents only a seeming contradiction that can be resolved by understanding both sides of the question. Instead, this is the kind of double talk which makes worldly people scoff at Christianity as being unreasonable and absurd.

But such was not the teaching of the ancient church. Ignatius, A.D. 30-107, lived at such an early age that there was a tradition that he was the infant whom Christ took up and blessed (Matt. 18:2). Ignatius continued the New Testament teaching against sinning Christianity. After stressing faith and love, he writes: "All other things which are requisite for the holy life follow after them. No man (truly) making a profession of faith sinneth; nor does he that possesses love hate anyone. The tree is made manifest by its fruit; so those that profess themselves to be Christians shall be recognized by their conduct. For there is not now a demand for mere profession, but that a man be found continuing in the power of faith to the end." [43] Justin Martyr, A.D. 110-165, was a converted heathen philosopher who gave his life as a martyr for Christ after a long and faithful ministry of Christian missionary work. He writes: "But there is no other (way) than this -- to become acquainted with this Christ, to be washed in the fountain spoken of by Isaiah for the remission of sins; and for the



rest, to live sinless lives." <sup>[44]</sup> The same writer also says: "And let those who are not found living as He taught, be understood to be no Christians, even though they profess with the lip the precepts of Christ." <sup>[45]</sup> Testimony of this kind from the Fathers of the primitive church could be multiplied indefinitely, but one will not find much help in such research from the older scholars because most of them were influenced by dogmatic bias which prevented their sorting out and emphasizing these passages. Modern critical scholars, however, have been quick to see and admit that the ancient church believed and taught a sinless life as a standard for its membership.

Dr. Adolph Harnack is undoubtedly the greatest Protestant church historian since the days of Neander. He writes: "The baptized person must remain pure, or (as 2 Clement, e. g., puts it) 'keep the seal pure and intact.'" <sup>[46]</sup> In the same volume Harnack writes: "Justin, however, declares that baptism is only for those who have actually ceased to sin." <sup>[47]</sup> Continuing in the same volume the writer explains how the standard was let down. Referring to the Christians of that time he says: "The three characteristic titles, however, are those of 'saints,' 'brethren,' and 'the church of God,' all of which hang together. The abandonment of the term 'disciples' for these self-chosen titles marks the most significant advance made by those who believed in Jesus. They took the name of 'saints,' because they were sanctified by God and for God through the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus, and because they were conscious of being truly holy and partakers in the future glory ... It [saints] remains the technical term applied by Christians to one another till after the middle of the second century; thereafter it gradually disappears, as Christians had no longer the courage to call themselves 'saints,' after all that had happened. Besides, what really distinguished Christians from one another by this time was the difference between the clergy and the laity (or the leaders and the led), so that the name 'saints' became quite obliterated; it was only recalled in hard times of persecution. In its place, 'Holy orders' arose (martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and finally -- during the third century -- the bishops), while 'holy media' (sacraments), whose fitful influence covered Christians who were personally unholy, assumed still greater prominence than in the first century. People were no longer conscious of being personally holy, but then they had holy martyrs, holy ascetics, holy priests, holy ordinances, holy writings, and a holy doctrine." <sup>[48]</sup>

The same author in his famous *History of Dogma* writes: "Because Christendom is a community of saints which has in its midst the sure salvation, all its members -- this is the necessary inference -- must lead a sinless life." <sup>[49]</sup> The famous New Testament scholar, Dr. Johannes Weiss, writes: "Nothing is more remote from the Apostle's [Paul's] purpose than the fostering of confession of sins. The great confession of human sinfulness in Romans 7:14-25 is not that of a Christian; here is a condition of things which have been conquered." <sup>[50]</sup> "Certainly, according to Paul's conception, the true spiritual Christian in whom the Spirit is everything and the flesh is nonexistent, cannot sin." <sup>[51]</sup> In fact, we can trace the exact point where the doctrine that all Christians must sin first entered the church. Windisch says that Origen (d. A.D. 254) legitimized the position of sinners in the church.

This amazing change of spiritual climate and attitude from the days of the apostolic church to our own time is well set forth by Dr. Arthur Cushman McGiffert. Dr. McGiffert was long professor of church history in Union Theological Seminary, New York, and has written largely on the history of Christian doctrine. "The significance of Luther's position at this point," he writes, "lies in the fact that he claimed to be already saved, not because already pure and righteous, but on other grounds altogether, and while still continuing to be impure and unrighteous. This constitutes the great difference between him and the Apostle Paul. Paul, too, thought of salvation as a present possession and of the Christian as already saved, but the ground of his salvation was moral transformation, not divine forgiveness. By the indwelling of the Spirit the Christian is not merely in process of sanctification, but is actually changed already into a holy being, or, in other words, is already saved. Paul was moved primarily by moral considerations, as Luther was not. To Paul the one dreadful thing was the corruption of the flesh to which the natural man is subject. To be freed from it by the agency of divine power -- this and this alone meant salvation. The influence of Paul, or the influence of the same forces which he felt, continued to dominate Christian thought, and salvation was always interpreted by Catholic theology, if not always by the Catholic populace, as salvation from sin. But the consciousness of sin was too general, and the sense of the divine presence and power too feeble to permit the heroic faith of Paul to continue, and salvation was inevitably pushed into the future, and the transformation of human nature was thought of as a gradual process completed only in another world. Luther broke with the Catholic theory, not by going back to Paul and asserting a present and instantaneous sanctification, but by repudiating altogether the Pauline and Catholic notion of salvation, and making it wholly a matter of divine forgiveness rather than of human character." <sup>[52]</sup>



It is significant that these admissions concerning the teachings of the apostolic church regarding freedom from sin are all cited from the foremost modern historical scholars in the Protestant church.

These references have made the development very clear: the ancient apostolic church believed that salvation was salvation from sin and from sinning, and that it is enjoyed now in this present world. As the weary ages rolled onward the standard was gradually lowered; sin and worldliness crept into the assemblies of the Christians. In due course of time they felt ashamed to profess to be saved from sin now; still they believed that, properly speaking, salvation meant salvation from sin. Therefore they reasoned that the whole life on earth is a preparation for salvation in the future life. If a Christian man dies in a very advanced state of spiritual grace he will be saved and go to heaven at the end of his earthly life. Judging, however, by their observation and their own experience, they finally came to regard such a possibility as extremely remote. Only the rarest saints would, they thought, die and go directly to heaven. For the vast majority of professing Christians there would be a longer or shorter period of purgation of sin in purgatory, after which they would attain to salvation and then go to heaven. Nevertheless, for some fifteen hundred years one truth was held firmly: namely, salvation is from sin. However, this truth was held in company with so many superstitious and unscriptural theories that Luther threw away a precious grain of truth with the chaff and started anew, with the truth that salvation is here and now in this life. But he thought that salvation is not from sin but in sin. That is to say, the Christian's salvation from sin is a hope rather than a definite present experience. And it is sad to realize that many able Christian teachers continue to hold this teaching in our own day. James Arminius, in the seventeenth century, and following him, John Wesley, in the eighteenth, carried the torch back to the truth of the apostolic church. These great scholars said salvation is salvation from sin and that it is experienced now in the present life. That takes us back to the doctrine of John and of Paul, the glorious freedom and liberty of the sons of God, taught over and over again by the writers of the New Testament.

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40 S. M. Merrill, *Christian Experience*, pp. 109-110

41 J. A. Wood, *Perfect Love*, p. 24

42 M. L. Haney, *Inheritance Restored*, p. 40

43 Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, chap. 14

44 Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. 44

45 *The First Apology of Justin*, chap. 16

46 Adolph Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 391

47 *Ibid.*, Footnote, p. 390

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 404-405

49 Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. III, p. 173

50 Johannes Weiss, *The History of Primitive Christianity*, Vol. II, p. 574

51 *Ibid.*, p. 575

52 Andrew Cushman McGiffert, *Protestant Thought before Kant*, p. 25 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Used by per.)







# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

## Chapter 7

### DIFFICULT TEXTS EXPLAINED

Doubtless it is just as hard to understand the difficult points of Christian doctrine without earnest study as it is to understand the science of chemistry or of medicine. One does not have to understand these sciences in order to benefit by taking the proper remedy for a given disease, but he must study earnestly if he is ever able to learn why the chemical affects him as it does. The Christian teacher of the present day is confronted by a confused situation. Everywhere the world is filled with careless, semi-heathen people who have no consciousness of sin. Apparently millions of wicked people today do not think they are sinners at all. They judge by purely naturalistic, animal standards and have no fear of God before their eyes. On the other hand there are a vast number of believers in traditional Christianity who misunderstand the doctrine of universal sinfulness in human nature without the grace of God and suppose that this sinfulness attaches to human life as long as life lasts.

Over against these two extremes, the doctrine which we hold teaches that all men inherited a sinful nature from Adam. This tendency to sin does not involve guilt until the child has grown up to a point where he rejects Christ and accepts the sin and guilt of the race as his own. We believe this rejection inevitably happens, and yet we believe that in Christ salvation from all sin here and now is granted as a free gift. This salvation is realized in two crises: first, justification and regeneration in which sin is forgiven and washed away; and a second crisis of entire sanctification in which the sinful tendency is removed in an epochal experience of the grace of God. Since there are no less than three different conditions of human nature described in the Bible, and inasmuch as biblical language is popular and figurative rather than technical and systematic, it stands to reason that a careless reader of the Bible may easily stumble upon a text which he will not understand through lack of proper knowledge of the rest of Scripture. Peter explained this danger in connection with the writings of Paul. He said that in these writings there "are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:16). We believe that all the scriptures in the Bible dealing with the subject of sin can be interpreted honestly and truthfully in the light of these principles. Moreover, we insist that they cannot be rightly understood otherwise. Following are some scriptures which have been interpreted to mean that no Christian can live above a constant course of committing sin.

#### THE STARS NOT PURE?

"Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth. What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water? How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?" (Job 4:17-19; 15:14-16; 25:4-6). We believe that the average scholar, free from dogmatic bias, would explain this language as an example of oriental emphasis in which a proposition is stated in an extreme form in order to lay stress upon it. Another illustration is that of the saying of Christ that a man must hate his father and mother in order to follow the Lord (Luke 14:26). Viewed in this light, the remark that the stars are not pure in his sight is simply poetry exalting the unapproachable holiness of God. However, Bible teachers who interpret the Scriptures in other than a literal manner are often accused of evading the truth. Therefore we are prepared to explain this scripture in a literal manner. The Book of Job is remarkable in that so many people are quoted. Even the devil is quoted in that book: "All that a man hath will he give for his life" (2:4). That is the Bible and it is true as a statement of the fact that Satan uttered it, but it is not true in its own essential meaning. Likewise, the texts which, as some assume, teach the necessity of the sinful life of Christians are quoted from the speeches



of Job's comforters. The Almighty himself said that Job was a perfect and an upright man (Job 1:8). Then Job in turn described these "comforters" as "forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value" (13:4). And again he said: "How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?" (21:34). But we have even stronger evidence that these remarks of Job's comforters were false doctrine, for God himself said: "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (42:7) After thus rebuking these false teachers the Almighty said: "And my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job."

Therefore, on the simplest literalistic basis, there is word for word proof that all this talk about God not trusting even his saints is false. On the contrary, even the Old Testament contains abundance of testimony to the existence of perfect men in that generation. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation" (Gen. 6:9). To Abraham God said: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God" (Deut. 18:13). "Mark the perfect man" (Ps. 37:37). "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way" (Ps. 101:2). "The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it" (Prov. 2:21). "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart" (II Kings 20:3). "To show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chron. 16:9).

### CAN A PERSON BE TOO GOOD?

"Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" (Eccles. 7:16). This text has puzzled many uneducated people. We think this text is understood by interpreting it as a warning against hypocrisy, an overstrained effort to put oneself in a better light than his fellows. Robert Burns pours his scorn upon the "unco guid," and Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who pretended to be better than they were. This is all reasonable, but to suppose that in the Bible one should find a caution against purity, holiness, and ardent devotion to the highest ideals is to slander the book instead of exalt it.

### DO ALL MEN SIN?

In three places in the Old Testament we read similar statements: "There is no man that sinneth not" (I Kings 8:46; II Chron. 6:36). "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccles. 7:20). A very cogent argument can be made for the statement that the New Testament experience is higher than anything possible in the Old Testament. It is spoken of as the better testament (Heb. 7:22), the better covenant (8:6), and cherishes a better hope (7:19). It is not necessary, however, to enter into an extended argument regarding the possibility of salvation from sinning in the Old Testament age inasmuch as these texts in the Hebrew simply mean there is no man who may not sin, and upon that point we can all agree.

### DO THE RIGHTEOUS FALL INTO SIN SEVEN TIMES A DAY?

"A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again" (Prov. 24:16). In the first place it is important to note that this does not say "seven times in a day." It might be seven times in a lifetime, although, of course, the seven is only a figurative number to express perfection. Whatever kind of falling it is, this represents the very worst extreme imaginable. If it is the fate of godly people to fall into the worst of sin, the outlook is sad indeed. However, it is not of sin that he is talking. The meaning is brought out plainly in Moffatt's translation. Evil men are planning plunder: "Villain, hands off the good man's house! ransack not his abode. A good man may fall seven times, but he rises; an evil man is crushed by a calamity" (24:15-16, Moffatt). In other words, the prowlers who seek to destroy the welfare of the righteous will be frustrated; no difference how many times the righteous man falls into calamity he will recover himself.

### HAS PERFECTION COLLAPSED?

"I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Ps. 119:96). Merely to read a modern translation of this passage is to understand it: "I see a limit to all things, but thy law has a boundless range" (Moffatt). In the original language this verse has simply the same meaning as the following passage in Isaiah: "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower



fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:6-8).

### WHO HAS MADE HIS HEART PURE?

"Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Prov. 20:9). This text certainly does not mean to teach that Christ cannot cleanse the heart; it is simply another way of saying that no man can cleanse his heart and make it pure by his own unaided, natural effort. There are people, however, whose hearts have been made pure by the grace of God. To deny this is to contradict our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8). It is God's will to "purify unto himself a peculiar people" (Titus 2:14), "purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9).

### ARE NONE GOOD?

"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God" (Matt. 19:16-17). Teachers of sinning Christianity seek to wrest this text to prove that there are no good people in the world, but in doing so they skirt close to the edge of blasphemy; for if their interpretation is correct, they insinuate that even Jesus was not good and therefore there was sin in him. The young man used the word "good" in mere formal courtesy, as "Gracious One." Jesus penetrates to the moral meaning of the word "good," seeking to discover a deeper meaning in it than the young man had surmised. The text teaches that God is the original fountain of all goodness. No one is good by nature and no one can be good except by the supernatural gift of the grace of God, but that this grace given does make men good is proved by the infallible words of Holy Scripture: "Joseph . . . was a good man" (Luke 23:50); "Barnabas . . . was a good man" (Acts 11:22-24); selfish people are "despisers of those that are good" (II Tim. 3:2-3); "A bishop must be . . . a lover of good men" (Titus 1:7-8).

There is a group of texts in Romans which is supposed to deny any possibility of a sinless life. The gist of these texts is: "There is none righteous, no not one" (3:10). This passage is taken from Psalms 14 and 53 and Isaiah 59, and reference to these origins of the quotations will show clearly that the Apostle was writing about wicked, unsaved people, and the purpose of his discourse is to prove the universal nature of sin in the unsaved. To apply this to Christians is to pervert the Word of God. Compare this with the following scripture: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (I John 3:7). "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (I John 2:29). Zacharias and Elizabeth "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16). "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them" (Matt. 13:17). Our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20). "Stand in awe, and sin not" (Ps. 4:4). "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (I Cor. 15:34). "Go, and sin no more" (John 8: lib). "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2). "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (I John 3:6-9). "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

### WAS PAUL SOLD UNDER SIN?

The seventh chapter of Romans has been a battleground of interpretation for centuries. The Greek Fathers consistently interpreted the experience there described as that of a conscientious, unconverted man trying to live right in his own strength. This was the orthodox interpretation of the text until the time of Augustine, who died A.D. 430. Augustine himself followed this interpretation until his conflict with Pelagius. Since Pelagius did not believe in the inheritance of the sinful tendency in mankind, Augustine revolted to the furthest extreme in combating Pelagius' views. It was then that Augustine adopted the view that the seventh chapter of Romans describes the experience of a converted man.

Our explanation is very simple: we revert to the doctrine of the ancient church. Paul is describing the condition of a man before his conversion, and yet not the condition of every man but only of those who are striving against sin. The present tense used in that passage is only an example of the historical present wherein the writer uses the present tense for the sake of emphasis. His delight in the law of God (vs. 22) was simply the preference of a decent man for justice and fair play. The law which wars against these ideals and brings him into captivity to the law of sin is the old carnal nature of sin whose victory marks him as an unconverted man. And the change which he later experienced is pointed out in the second verse of the eighth chapter: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,



and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." I could bring a long array of able modern commentators to support this interpretation. Prof. C. Anderson Scott, writing in *The Abingdon Bible Commentary* on this passage, says: "Paul writes in the present tense, but he is really projecting his mind back to the period before his conversion, when he had found the promise held out by the Law or on behalf of the Law a hopeless deception."<sup>[53]</sup> However, Dr. Scott concedes that there is a struggle with the indwelling power of sin in the heart of the believer even after his conversion, and he is in doubt whether that struggle is not somewhat reflected in this chapter.

### WAS PAUL'S THORN SINFUL?

"Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (II Cor. 12:7). The flesh with which Paul was here afflicted was not the sinful nature which Paul sometimes calls flesh, but his physical human nature, the flesh to which he refers in Galatians 2:20 when he says: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." Although Paul prayed three times to be delivered from this thorn, God comforted him with the assurance: "My grace is sufficient for thee." And out of this Paul drew the consolation: "I will rather glory in my infirmities." Then he goes on to define the infirmities: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." There is all the explanation of the thorn that any earnest student need seek. The thorn in his flesh was persecutions and distresses which he endured for the sake of the gospel.

### ARE OUR BODIES VILE?

Pleaders for the necessity of the sinful life in Christians quote Paul as follows: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21). All that is necessary to explain this verse is to quote the comment of Bishop J. B. Lightfoot on this passage. All scholars know that J. B. Lightfoot was one of the greatest New Testament scholars of modern times. He writes "of our humiliation, i. e., the body which we bear in our present low estate, which is exposed to all the passions, sufferings, and indignities of this life. The English translation, 'our vile body,' seems to countenance the Stoic contempt of the body, of which there is no tinge in the original."<sup>[54]</sup>

### Keeping the Body Under

It is argued that Paul's body was a body of sin because he wrote in his letter to the church in Corinth: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27). If we are willing to concede the truth of the Scriptures which teach that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost (6:19) and that it is possible to be saved from all sin (I John 1:7), then this scripture need not give us any difficulty. It is self-evident that before Adam sinned, and while he was still in a state of perfection, he was possessed of all the appetites, drives, and instincts of human nature. In this earthly life these appetites furnish an occasion of sin. However, they also furnish an opportunity for spiritual development and growth in grace as one practices godly self-control regarding them. The appetites of the body are just like the cylinders in an automobile engine: they drive the machine without regard to its moral objectives just as an automobile engine will drive the automobile off the road and into the ditch quite as readily as it will drive it along the highway. It is the responsibility of the driver to exercise wise and diligent control. We all know how earnest and watchful the driver of a high-powered automobile must be on the highway, and it is just such self-control which Paul declared he exercised over his body.

### DO WE DIE DAILY?

It is said that even Paul could not have enjoyed complete and enduring victory over sin because he said, "I die daily" (I Cor. 15:31). Any thoughtful person who will read the following verse will certainly have no trouble with this text: "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus" (in other words, Paul's life was exposed to peril like that of the gladiators in the arena). In verse 30 he said: "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" Why he was in jeopardy and how he died daily is further explained in his own words: "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much



patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; ... by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: .... as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed" (II Cor. 6:4-9). Reading this passage as a testimony to Paul's spiritual experience will prove that Paul professed the grace of full salvation.

### WAS PAUL PERFECT?

Paul wrote, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (Phil. 3:12). It is evident that there are different kinds of perfection mentioned in the New Testament. Even Jesus says, "And the third day I shall be perfected" (Luke 13:32). The perfection to which Paul had not yet attained was the glorified experience of resurrection from the dead. This is the obvious meaning of the passage; it is so plain that only those blinded by dogmatism can fail to see it. In verse 11 of this same chapter Paul says: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." The meaning is simply that Paul denies that he has been raised from the dead in his mortal body. Why should anybody make such a denial? Is that not too plain to need proof? So it would seem, but there were false teachers who were spiritualizing the resurrection, some saying that the resurrection is past already (II Tim. 2:18). Others twisted Paul's own words (Eph. 2:6 and Col. 3:1) in order to maintain that the experience of regeneration was all the resurrection that was to be expected.

### WAS PAUL THE CHIEF OF SINNERS?

Paul wrote: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15). It stands to reason that if Paul was the chief of sinners at the very moment when he was preaching the gospel and preparing to die a martyr's death as one of the very foremost apostles, then no human being can be anything better than a sinner. Doubtless there is a sense in which a man's past record lives in history in spite of all he might do to change it. Paul's record as a persecutor of Christ was a source of pain to him as long as he lived. Paul's language in I Timothy 1:15 is simply an instance of the historical present tense, which an eloquent writer or speaker uses in order to bring all the past vividly before the mind of the hearer or reader. It is nothing less than a wicked burlesque on the gospel to claim that one who was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles (II Cor. 11:5; 12:11) should be at the same time chief of sinners. No atheist has ever been bold enough to slander Christianity as gravely as that. Slander it would be if that interpretation were true. As an apostle, he was one of the stewards of the mystery revealed unto the holy apostles (Eph. 3:5). He called the Thessalonian church to witness, "and God also, how horny and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (I Thess. 2:10). He made a profession of Christian perfection: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Phil. 3:15). On his journey to Rome he was sure "that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:29). He was crucified with Christ, and Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20). God inspired him to write a portion of the New Testament. Shortly after he wrote about being the chief of sinners, he said: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8). He advised the Corinthians to "awake to righteousness, and sin not" (I Cor. 15:34). "Shall we continue in sin," he asks, "that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1-2). "Whosoever abideth in him," writes John, "sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him ... He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (I John 3:6-9). Paul lived in Christ for many years (II Cor. 12:2); he had seen Jesus Christ our Lord (I Cor. 9:1). He said: "I know whom I have believed" (II Tim. 1:12). It is impossible to reconcile these scriptures with the theory that a man can be the chief of sinners and the chief of apostles without hypocrisy at the same instant of his life.

### PAUL PROFESSED ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

"How shall WE, THAT ARE DEAD TO SIN, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2). His old man was crucified with Christ (vs. 6). He testified: "I AM CRUCIFIED with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD" (Gal. 2:20). This crucifixion was both inward and outward: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I UNTO THE WORLD" (6:14). The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me



FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH (Rom. 8:2). He served the Lord with all humility and told the Ephesian elders that he kept back nothing that was profitable for them (Acts 20:19-20), thus he had perfect humility and perfect freedom from the fear of man. These are marks of that perfect love which casteth out fear (I John 4:18). Paul never makes a confession of sin in his prayers, but prays for the sanctification of his hearers (I Thess. 5:23). He exhorts his hearers to imitate the purity of his life: "Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do" (Phil. 4:9). "I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (I Cor. 4:16). He could exhort others to follow him because "ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (I Thess. 2:10), and because he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God (II Cor. 4:2). He had perfect love even for his bitterest enemies. The Jews beat him five times with forty stripes save one (11:24), and yet he loved them with the deepest passion of love: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:1-3). This is perfect love, the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ

### CAN WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN?

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). The Apostle was writing in the sunset of the Apostolic Age. Around him was the gathering darkness of a deep heresy called Gnosticism, which persisted for generations to torment and perplex the church and its leaders. Dr. Daniel Steele writes: "Just what John means will be seen when we find what great errors he is writing against. He lived long enough to see the germs of so-called Gnosticism springing up to corrupt the church. Their basal error was dualism, two eternal, uncreated principles in conflict, good and evil, the latter making its abode in matter, and identifying itself therewith in such a way as to be inexpungeable by God himself. One branch of the Gnostics taught that spirit is perfectly free from sin, and cannot be tainted or soiled by it, since sin is limited to the sphere of matter, and there is no bridge nor pontoon from one to the other. Hence the human spirit is sinless, though its material development may be foul with lust, debauchery, gluttony, and drunkenness. The favorite simile of the Gnostics was, the sinless soul in a polluted body is like a golden jewel in a pigsty, encompassed by filth, yet without mixture with it. He who embraced this philosophy had no need of the blood of Christ as the ground of the forgiveness of sin, because his spirit, his real personality, had no sin to be forgiven, no pollution to be cleansed. This is exactly what John means when he says, I John 1:8, 'If we' -- i.e., any Gnostic -- 'say we have no sin,' needing the atonement, 'we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' But if anyone abandons his false philosophy, confesses his sin, and makes a clean breast by his full acknowledgment and genuine repentance, 'he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This exegesis is in perfect harmony with the announced purpose of the Epistle, 2:1, 'That ye sin not.' It avoids making John flatly contradict himself when he says (3:9), 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.' Above all, it avoids the absurdity of recommending a medicine as a perfect cure, and in the same breath branding every testimony to such a cure through its use as a piece of self-deception, or an unmitigated lie." [55]

### MUST WE ALWAYS PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS?

"Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4).

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

Undoubtedly these are the strongest texts in all the Bible with which to support the doctrine that all Christians sin continually and need constantly to pray for forgiveness of sin. Most holiness people start with the "debts" text and explain that as meaning our human weaknesses and unintentional mistakes. After the "debts" the "sins" are explained as meaning the same thing. But the answer to that is that if these things are not sins why need Christians to pray for forgiveness regarding them?

Although the New Testament contains many prayers, or references to prayer, not once is there any record of any Christian who prayed for forgiveness of sin, nor of a New Testament writer exhorting true Christians so to pray. Paul condemned certain persons for specific sins, but he never sanctioned a general confession of sins on the part of Christians.

What, then, is the meaning of the prayer for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer? It is this: the Lord's Prayer is a social prayer.



It is not a prayer for an individual Christian. It is the priestly prayer of all Christians wherein they, as New Testament priests, present 'supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks ... for all men" (I Tim. 2:1), as commanded by Paul.

Many people cannot understand the delicate courtesy of the saints of the New Testament as they include themselves in the things they condemn in order to make their warnings more palatable, even though many fanatics would condemn them for so doing. Take as a single instance the following: "Therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God" (Jas. 3:9).

Does any earnest Christian think for a moment that the Apostle James meant to confess here that he was in the habit of cursing men? The "we" is simply meant to identify himself with all men in the moral government of God.

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53 C. Anderson Scott, The Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 1152

54 J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle to the Philippians, p. 156

55 Daniel Steele, Half Hours with St. Paul, pp. 147-148



# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

## Chapter 8

### HEALING IN THE PLAN OF SALVATION

#### The Faith That Heals

Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them" (Matt. 4:23-24). "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:14-16).

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (III John 2).

That health is a boon for which all men long is a statement too self-evident to require proof. Throughout all the ages of time up until our modern era it has always been accepted as a matter of fact that religion and health are closely connected. Nearly all ancient religion was concerned with the health of the body as well as, and sometimes more than, the health of the soul. Not only did the savage medicine man exert all his efforts to heal the sick among his fellow tribesmen, but the cultured pagans of classical Greece and Rome resorted to the temples and the priests for the healing of their diseases. The ministry of healing by religious means was carried on in the Christian church, and has continued right down to modern times. Religious healing is still followed to some extent in the church of Rome, as well as by many individual Protestant Christians.

Speaking generally, however, modern informed opinion has tended sharply to divide healing of the body from healing of the soul. The main bodies of Protestant religious belief have been inclined to follow this lead, and thus the custom has grown up among us to refer the sickness of the soul to the care of the minister and the sickness of the body to the attention of the physician in the definite opinion that neither of these has anything to do with the work of the other. Such an attitude was quite consistent with the narrow materialistic science of the age which is now passing.

Every thoughtful Christian should have his attention directed to the loss which evangelical Christianity has suffered by this sharp divorce of the healing of the body from the healing of the soul. The draining out of the ministry of healing from the work of evangelical religion has tended to impoverish and to dry out that religion. When we remember that ancient Christianity ministered to mankind economically in love and charity, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and lodging the homeless; physically in the work of bodily healing; and educationally by teaching the minds of children and youth, as well as religiously, it is easy to see what a loss our modern evangelical Christianity has suffered by its divorce from three of these ministries. The rise of modern non-Christian cults which attempt to exercise a ministry of healing has been greatly encouraged, if not entirely made possible, by this loss of the ministry of healing from Protestant Christianity.

Inasmuch as healing has been given up largely in response to the claims of science it will be interesting to note the development of the next fifty years, for science is now beginning to recognize something of the meaning of religion for health. The science of the last hundred years has tended to be analytical, dividing each aspect of reality into its minutest part, but the science of the present day moves in a different direction and seeks to understand the organic relation of the things to be studied. In regard to the human personality, the wholeness of man's being is better understood now than



previously. The parts of a man's body have no meaning except in their relations to the whole body, and the body itself cannot be treated fully and satisfactorily except with some knowledge of its relation to that consciousness commonly called "mind," which Christians call the "soul," or "spirit" The relation of the mind to health is discussed in the science called psychiatry. This is a term made up of two words: "mind" and "healing." This scientific development is producing a revolution in our thinking regarding the relation of religion to health. While it is not my intention to delve into the mysteries of this new science, I may simply say in passing that it has not given much encouragement to the modern healing cults and to the common idea of healing by suggestion, or as it is sometimes called, "mind healing." Most people have very naive ideas about healing by faith. They assume that faith healing means that if you think you are well you are well, and if you think you are sick you are sick. It is your beliefs that change your physical condition. This is the kind of healing which the healing cults usually promote, and the scientific name for it is suggestion, or hypnotism. Psychiatry takes a different turn entirely. It has no such simple message as "think you are well and you are well." It goes far beyond that. Modern scientific study of the mind delves deeper than hatred, stubbornness, despair, and the like as causes of disease. It penetrates to the frustrations, discouragements, and disappointments, and even the false ideals and false philosophies of life which cause these sickly attitudes of the mind and are often reflected in sickness of the body. Modern science does not teach that we should ignore all these hidden diseases of the personality and simply think we are well in spite of them. It teaches, rather, that the personality must be healed and that when the personality is thoroughly healed the recovery of health is likely to be more easily accomplished. I say "more easily accomplished" because it is an extreme position to say that all disease arises from disorders of the mind.

## NATURAL AND MIRACULOUS HEALINGS

Nearly all Christians who have an interest in this subject seek an answer to the question: what is the difference between natural healing and healing by the power of God? To this question many Christians reply that there is no difference because it all comes from the Lord anyway, since God gives nature its power to heal. Others are not satisfied with this answer, and yet do not know whether, or how, it is defective.

It seems to me that the answer to this question waits upon our understanding of the definition of miracle and the difference between the natural and the supernatural. If we can find our way through this mystery the answer to our question ought to stand out fairly clear. Evidently the meaning of "natural" and "supernatural" is a baffling subject to some of our greatest minds. I have read weighty books by professors which completely miss the point here and involve the whole subject in hopeless confusion. Many people regard the supernatural as merely an extension of the natural into realms which we cannot understand. They think Of the supernatural as a region of mystery, a land of ghosts, dreams, visions, and fantasy. Some people describe a miracle as a violation of the laws of nature.

I feel sure that this subject cannot be discussed profitably in a popular book without making a large use of figures and illustrations drawn from our everyday life. And if some lofty philosopher should deign to cast his eye upon the simple illustrations he need not feel too contemptuous, inasmuch as all human thought, even the highest, has climbed up such simple ladders as these. Such being the case, and meanwhile fully bearing in mind that no symbol or illustration can completely express all the riches of these truths, let us boldly face our hard problem. The mystery of the world is shut up in each man's own personality. All the things that puzzle us come to a focus within our own selves and the only way we can grasp the slightest idea of what God is like is by comparison with ourselves. Many people have condemned this method of approach. They say God is so far above us that it is blasphemous to make any comparison. To this we reply that we do not deny that God is above us; we do not pretend to know all about God. Nevertheless, if the meaning of "spirit" is not given to us in our own spirit, then we can never have the faintest surmise as to what spirit is. Now the Bible teaches us that God is a Spirit; it teaches us also that he is our heavenly Father. If these things are true, there must be some likeness between God and ourselves.

As we study the Bible we discover that men were made in the image of God. Human beings originally possessed that image in two phases: naturally, as personality and immortality; and morally, as righteousness and true holiness. When Adam sinned against God he lost the moral nature of God but he still retained the natural image of God in human personality and immortality. This human personality in man has three phases: intellect, emotion, and will. Surely God has such a personality as that, although he may have other phases of personality which we cannot even imagine. He certainly has no less powers of personality than we have. If, then, there is this likeness between the nature of God and of mankind, we have here a fairly clear mirror in which we may study the difference between the natural and the supernatural A man



looks at his physical body and sees that it has been endowed with certain powers of functioning quite independently of his conscious will. The heart beats, the liver secretes, the bones of a child grow, and many other functions of physical life are carried on quite independently of the personal attention of the human being who occupies the body. And yet we know that it is through the activating power of his soul that the otherwise dead elements of his body move, live, and function in accordance with a predetermined pattern which we call the nature of the human body. In the same way, God lives in his universe. He is not the same as the universe, just as my soul is not the same as my body. If I should die my soul would be withdrawn from my body and the body would perish as a human body. When God shall withdraw his presence from the universe of matter, then that material universe will perish. However, it will not perish as my body does, but it will go out of existence entirely.

In such an illustration as this it is necessary to be closely on our guard not to identify God's presence and life in matter with matter itself because matter is a creation of God, and to identify the two is one of the greatest heresies in religious thought. Now, this presence of the life of God in matter is called the "divine immanence." By his presence in matter God causes matter to function according to certain definite and universal laws. These laws are, so far as we can tell, perfectly uniform and the same for all people and all time. It is this uniformity of the laws of nature which makes science possible; if these laws varied from day to day no certain knowledge could ever be gained. Now, while I live in my body, I also have a self-conscious life in which I can direct my thoughts and my activities and even the behavior of my body by my own personal will. This phase of life in man we call self-consciousness, and the self-consciousness of God is the realm of the supernatural. This self-consciousness of God in which he can look upon the universe as something other than himself and in which he can will and choose and live his own personal life is sometimes called "divine transcendence." We can call it by any one of these names: the self-consciousness of God, the transcendence of God, or the realm of the supernatural. The realm of the supernatural, then, is that phase of the life of God in which he is conscious of himself and lives the life of a free, self-directing personality. Many scientists and philosophers deny this exalted state of being to God, but it is of the essence of Christian doctrine that God shall be a personal being, for only as such can he be our heavenly Father.

To make our illustration fully Christian it is necessary to remember that, while I am not conscious of all the functioning of my physical body nor of its nature and structure, God is all-wise and all-knowing, therefore he knows all about the structure of the universe and is fully aware of every operation in the realm of nature. The difference between the supernatural and the natural comes in here. Although God is fully aware of the rise of sap in the tree in the spring and of the process by which the diamond is crystallized in the heart of the mighty rock, yet in his infinite wisdom he permits these things to exist and function in accordance with one enduring and fixed purpose and mode of activity which we call "natural law." The miracle occurs when God, for the purpose of accomplishing his holy purpose, exercises his personal will and power to accomplish results which otherwise would not come to pass by the free functioning of the laws of nature. If this is true, then, we may begin to understand that whatever comes to pass in the realm of the supernatural is a miracle. Whatever God does by personal intention is a miracle. Everything that happens, therefore, in this realm of the divine personality is a miracle. That is why all Spirit-inspired prayer and all the works of salvation are miracles. In other words, a miracle need not be something violating the laws of nature, but something which God intentionally does by his own personal will.

#### DOES A MIRACLE VIOLATE THE LAWS OF NATURE?

It is generally supposed that a miracle is necessarily a violation of the laws of nature. In speaking here a devout Christian must tread softly before the Lord. The laws of nature are merely uniform from the standpoint of our observation. The Christian cannot easily conceive of these laws as being necessary and fixed from the standpoint of the power of God. Our faith in God's infinite power makes it easy for us to believe that he could and will suspend or, as we say, violate any or all of the laws of nature whenever he chooses to do so. For us it can never be a question of power. There is, however, for thoughtful Christians a question of ethics, a question of right and wrong. Would it be right for God to change or to suspend these laws of nature upon which all our earthly knowledge depends? They seem to stand as God's pledge for the accuracy and truthfulness of our knowledge. We base all our science and all our reasoning upon the proposition that these laws are true. If God should purposely upset any of them it would be as great a shock to thoughtful men as if he had violated some other kind of contract or agreement. Remember, I do not say that God will not suspend, or change, or violate the laws of nature. I only say that it does not seem probable, though it may be possible, because such knowledge is beyond our finite grasp. However, even should the laws of nature be uniform and infallible so that God himself would respect them for moral considerations, not because of any lack of his power, I do not thereby see any reason to doubt any miracle of the



Bible nor the possibility of any kind of miracle which God might choose to perform.

Without being dogmatic, I merely suggest here that men have by a partial understanding of the laws of nature combined those laws to produce astonishing effects. It is now possible for some ten tons of steel to float through the air from New York to San Francisco. Only a few years ago people would have said that such a wonder was impossible and that its performance would involve a miracle. Now we know that men can perform this stupendous feat by managing the laws of nature with which they have become acquainted. If men, who know the smallest part of the laws of nature, can do such things when they wish, why cannot God, with his infinite knowledge of all the laws, manipulate and combine them in such a way as to produce any effect which he might have a wish to perform? Of course, I know the question will arise here that if God should do such things using natural means it would not be a miracle because a miracle is something contrary to nature. That is just the point which I am laboring: that a miracle need not be contrary to nature but that it must be above nature, and it must be the personal act of God growing out of his personal wish and the conscious exercise of his power. The supernatural would appear in the purpose of God and the conscious combination of physical forces which otherwise would not be thus combined. Thus a man builds a house on a lot which without his personal agency would never have such a house, and yet he does not call that a miracle. I do not see why God could not, if he so desired, build any kind of house imaginable without violating any law of nature any more than a man would. Here, of course, we would say that the building of such a house would be a miracle, if we could really believe that it happened.

These reflections will help us to see the difference between natural and miraculous healing. If a man exercises, eats proper food, takes the right medicine, and thus regains his health we should say that while what he did was not contrary to the will of God, nevertheless the restoration of his health came through the operation of purely natural forces and laws without any personal intervention on the part of God; therefore it was a natural healing. The same thing happens when a person uses suggestion and thus gets over the belief that he is sick. But supernatural, or miraculous, healing comes to pass when, through prayer, the afflicted person gets in touch with God personally, and God, as a personal act of love and favor, heals the sickness and restores the person to health.

#### HOW IS HEALING POSSIBLE?

For a good many years Christians have been debating the question of whether this supernatural physical healing is in the atonement. Some have said it is not in the atonement, but that it is a redemption blessing. Of course such talk is childish, for a redemption blessing is something that comes to us through the atonement. Others do not like to admit that divine healing is in the atonement because they think that to do so involves the conclusion that all sick people are sinners and that if they do not get healed in answer to prayer it is a mark of grave spiritual defect. Or to put it plainly, the person who prays for healing and is not healed thereby proves that he is stained with some secret, hidden sin. When matters are pushed to such a conclusion it is small wonder that many find themselves unable to follow. Most of us know saintly souls who have suffered much from illness despite the fact that they have prayed earnestly and apparently not without some faith. Rather than accuse such people of being guilty of some secret sin, many prefer to reinterpret the doctrine. It is usually taken for granted that if physical healing for the body is in the atonement, then such healing may be expected in the large measure of the widest conception of God's grace on exactly the same basis as forgiveness of sins. Now it is our common experience that divine physical healing does not come so universally as that, and even though we grant that weakness of faith limits the expected result we are still faced with the fact that some of the apparently best people fail to get healed. How shall we explain this apparent contradiction? To begin with, let me state clearly that I believe divine healing is in the atonement. Every supernatural blessing which we receive is a mark of God's personal favor, or grace. Supernatural healing is one of these marks and can be based only upon the atonement. The only way in which healing would be possible, aside from the atonement, would be through the ordinary processes of nature working in man's body according to natural law precisely the same as they work in the bodies of animals and vegetation and in the inorganic world of nature. Since most Christians believe more or less that God can heal our bodies, then to that extent do they necessarily believe that our bodies participate in the benefits of Christ's atonement; for the supernatural grace of God, the personal evidence of his favor, comes in no other way.

If at this point we will observe closely the path of scriptural teaching we shall be saved from many heartbreaking discouragements. The text in Isaiah 53:5 which says: "With his stripes we are healed," has prompted many efforts to explain it away as having no reference to healing of the body. I regard these efforts as futile and unworthy of serious consideration, partly because they are made from dogmatic motives; that is, they are simply an effort to disprove



something which for dogmatic reasons we do not wish to believe. That the sufferings of Christ were endured in behalf of our bodies as well as for our souls is the plain teaching of Matthew 8:16-17, where we are told that Christ "healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." It should exalt the plan of salvation for us to realize that it includes the whole nature and being of the sinner within the scope of its redemptive grace and power. Here, however, we are forced to admit that there is a distinction in the time when the fullness of redemption is realized by body and soul. Space forbids arguing the point here that salvation for the soul is perfect and complete here and now in this earthly life. Every believer has full access to all the blessings of the redeeming grace of God insofar as these apply to redemption from sin. Nevertheless, we are free to state that there is a time limit regarding the redemption of the body from the penalty of sin, which is disease and death. In the Roman letter the Apostle Paul argues at great length and with tremendous emphasis that physical death is the result of sin: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, AND DEATH BY SIN; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (5:12). This great passage alone would place healing and the redemption of the body within the scope of the atonement, otherwise there would never be any resurrection of the dead.

Death, then, in the teaching of Paul, is caused by sin. It would take a book to go into this point fully, inasmuch as the researches of geology show us that animals died before the coming of man. No doubt a provision was made in God's grace whereby man would not suffer the penalty of death if he were obedient and holy. This provision was lost in man's transgression and restored eventually in the atonement of Christ. We must see clearly that all forms of disease are simply one phase of death. Death and disease are two aspects of the same thing. Any disease will kill you if it runs its full course unhampered. No one ever dies without some disease, if we take disease in the broadest meaning of the word, a disordered condition of the body. If an automobile strikes a tree and its occupants are killed suddenly, investigation will show that each body was in a disordered condition. Whether this disordered condition is wrought by being suddenly dashed against a tree or by the ravages of germs over a period of time is immaterial. Disease is the beginning of death, and death is the completion of disease.

If the atonement of Christ was meant to deliver our bodies from death, the unbeliever will say that it was all in vain since we all do die. The Apostle himself taught the same thing when he said: "It is appointed unto man once to die." How and when, then, is this redemption of the body completed? It is the universal faith of Christendom that this redemption of the body is completed in the resurrection when all of the effects of sin are completely overruled forever -- all of its penalty forever canceled -- and the redeemed bodies of the saints arise from their graves shining with the glory of the sons of God. This, then, is the full fruit of the redemption of the body. It is never completely realized, and cannot be completely realized, until the resurrection day. And so we read: "Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

Redemption from sin is complete here and now in this world, but redemption from the physical effects of sin, disease and death -- that is, the adoption or redemption of our bodies -waits for that time when we shall share the glory of the sons of God in the resurrection.

This fact ought to explain many of the baffling questions which have been raised concerning divine healing. If healing is in the atonement, how does it come that many saints are sick and all of them eventually die, mostly by afflictions which are plainly acknowledged as disease? To this the answer is that supernatural physical healing is the first fruit of the resurrection life of Christ. By faith it is experienced here and now in this world according to our needs from time to time. All who have been healed in this way are witnesses to the sublime joy which one experiences as he realizes the inflowing of this gracious healing touch of the Spirit into his afflicted body. No wonder this touch gives joy, for it is actually a foretaste of the resurrection life of Christ poured graciously like healing balm into our pained earthly bodies.

In many cases this healing grace seems to flow like the tides of God's life through our sick bodies, washing out every trace of the old disease or affliction which has troubled us, but in all such cases we must bear in mind that it is God's intention that this blessing shall be temporary and shall in no wise annul completely the penalty of death which stands upon the race until its perfect realization in the adoption, to wit: the redemption of our body at the resurrection. Nevertheless, multitudes of true Christians have enjoyed a deeper sense of fellowship with God and a keener realization of his presence in their lives by trusting him for the healing of their physical diseases. By this means they have found not only a cure for the most painful and desperate afflictions, but also the sweet comfort and encouragement which comes from a vivid assurance of



friendship with the Eternal.

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# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

## Chapter 9

### THE DANGER OF LOSING SALVATION

There are those who tell us that a Christian once saved can never fall away. Over the radio, through the press, and from the pulpit we hear it repeated thousands of times that Christians are eternally secure, that they cannot fall away if ever they have been truly converted. Now, it is a bad thing to be too timid and fearful. Christians should not live under such a bondage, but all our experience shows that it is also a bad thing to be too self-confident. Complacency is a dangerous attitude in a time of warfare such as we always have with Satan. Somewhere we as Christians must find a safe place between these two extremes. That place is in the written Word of God. There we learn that we can indeed keep from falling, but only in one way.

The Word of God teaches plainly that the only way to keep from falling is to keep from sinning. On the very face of it, this assertion seems so plain that we cannot see how anyone could possibly deny it. To sin is to fall away from God. There are no means by which anyone ever did fall away from God except through sin. I Chronicles 28:9 reads: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever." This text shows plainly that no one can be secure if he forsakes God. Even though that person were accepted of God, he will, when he forsakes God, be cast off forever unless he repents.

The Scriptures plainly teach that the righteous may fall away into sin and be lost forever. "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live?" Here is a question for those who believe that eternal security is possible for a soul living in disobedience. In the same verse the prophet answers his own question: "All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezek. 18:24).

Observe closely that there is no promise of some kind of compulsory repentance overtaking this man. He will die in his sin if he proves stubborn. This text seems to be written especially for believers in final perseverance in order to show them the error of their way. The reply is sometimes made that this is the self-righteousness of professed Christians and not true righteousness, but it is certainly true righteousness from which the man in question turns. In the first place, it is a righteousness which would save him if he continued in it, because we read in the twenty-second verse of the same chapter: "In his righteousness that he hath done he shall live." Therefore, it is not self-righteousness but true righteousness, a righteousness unto life and not unto death.

Moreover, it is impossible to turn from self-righteousness to iniquity, for the simple reason that self-righteousness is iniquity in and of itself. It is impossible to turn from dishonesty to thievery because thievery is dishonesty, and by the same rule one cannot turn from self-righteousness to iniquity because self-righteousness is iniquity.

Furthermore, if the righteousness here mentioned were self-righteousness and not true righteousness, then turning from this self-righteousness would be a real reformation and, as such, would be worthy of reward and not of death.

The whole thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel is a God-inspired sermon against the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints; that is, against the doctrine that the saints will be saved even if they enter upon a life of disobedience. We read: "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it" (vs. 13). We see here that God distinguishes very carefully between man's own self-righteousness and true righteousness, and the Word



says that if man trust in his own righteousness, then his true righteousness will not be remembered.

Ezekiel says that man will die in his trespass and in his sins that he hath sinned (18:24); and that he will die for his iniquities (33:13). That is, he dies in his iniquity and he dies for his iniquity.

## NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS

The solemn prophetic message of Ezekiel is by no means the only teaching of the Old Testament on this subject, but for the sake of brevity let us turn to the New Testament. In the Gospel of John (15:4-6) we read: "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. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Here the Lord Jesus teaches that individual Christians are the branches of the vine of Christ. He says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." Each of these branches is a member equal with every other member of the body of Christ and an inheritor of the grace of salvation. One is as fully saved as another; each has an equal claim to the hope of eternal security. But some of these branches fail to bring forth fruit. They cease to abide in Christ, and by that act of disobedience and sin they are cut off and withered. There is no promise that they will be grafted back into the holy vine in the future before they die. Quite the contrary, it is said plainly that they will be burned and be thus hopelessly lost to the vine forever.

The Scriptures plainly teach that Christians may fall from grace. When the Apostle addressed the churches of Galatia he warned them of this very thing: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (5:4). He did not say that they seem to be fallen, or that he thought they were fallen, but they "ARE fallen from grace."

In the sixth and tenth chapters of Hebrews we read what I think are the most solemn warnings in the New Testament: Many poor souls have been troubled by these stern and solemn warnings and have rushed to the conclusion that they have sinned against the Holy Spirit and can never be saved again. The meaning of the two passages is plain enough when they are properly understood. The Book of Hebrews was addressed to Christians of the Jewish race who were entering into a period of persecutions. They were being pressed on every side to desert the religion of Christ and go back into the religion of their childhood. The Apostle solemnly warned them that to do so is to apostatize from the Christian religion and to put themselves outside any further hope.

The point to remember is, however, that if it were impossible for Christians to fall away, then the warning of the Book of Hebrews would be altogether unnecessary; and if true believers cannot fall away into sin and be lost, then the Book of Hebrews is positively untrue. Of course, we believe that the book is God-inspired and that to say it is untrue is the same as to call God a liar. However, it states positively that believers can fall away. We shall stand by the book, and shall believe that the doctrine is untrue.

Turn to Hebrews 6 and read: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (vss. 4-8).

Notice that here is a case of believers who were once enlightened, who had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. They had tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, and yet it was possible for them to fall away.

Teachers of the final perseverance doctrine claim that these were not real Christians, but I put it up to any fair-minded persons to try to find words which will describe a true Christian more accurately than these foregoing expressions taken



from that passage. How can a man be a partaker of the Holy Ghost without being truly saved?

The same doctrine is taught in the tenth chapter as follows: "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (vss. 27-31).

In this passage the thought is made even more plain, if that is possible. Everything that human language can say to make this point plain is written in this passage. Previously, in verse 19, he has called them "brethren." He also said: "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (vs. 22). Then he warned them that "if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for a judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (vss. 26-27).

Note carefully that the apostates are those who have trodden under foot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing. Here are people who have been sanctified and then trod that blood under foot. Though they were once converted and sanctified, such people cannot be saved in an apostate condition; and unless they repent they will perish in hell forever. If these words from Hebrews do not teach this, then human language has no meaning.

We find the same doctrine taught by the Apostle Peter: "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1:9-10). Here is an example of a man who was once purged from his old sins and has forgotten that experience. Now he is blind. Would a person who was spiritually blind and had forgotten that he was ever saved be any kind of Christian at all? We think not. Nevertheless, there is a way to insure eternal security and that is to give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for, "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." In other words, living in obedience and faith we stand; living in disobedience and unbelief we fall.

Further along in the same epistle Peter emphasizes this lesson: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2:14-21).

Here are persons who were real Christians, because they were in the right way before they went astray. Now they have fallen into final and ruinous apostasy. Having once escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they have become again entangled therein and overcome, and the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Once they knew the way of righteousness, and now they have turned from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It would have been better for them never to have been converted; though they were once in the right way, now there is reserved for them the mists of darkness forever. Surely, in the face of these solemn warnings it is impossible longer to believe that Christians cannot fall away into sin and apostasy and be lost forever.

#### EXAMPLES OF FINAL APOSTASY

The Scriptures abound with examples of those who fell away from the grace of God into hopeless apostasy and an eternally lost condition. First of all, we read of the angels who were created holy by God's hand but fell away into sin



through disobedience. The Apostle Peter tells us the story: "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (II Pet. 2:4).

Eve, the mother of all living, was created holy, without sin, but she fell into transgression. The Apostle Paul warns the Corinthian brethren against apostasy by her example. He said: "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). The children of Israel who came out of Egypt were all godly, as described by the Apostle Paul: "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (I Cor. 10:2-4). These verses show that these people were saved at the time. They drank of the spiritual rock; and they ate the spiritual meat. The Apostle continues: "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (vss. 5-12). Here the Apostle shows that although they were all partakers of the spiritual drink of Christ, nevertheless many of them fell into sin and were punished by death while in an apostate state.

In I Samuel 10:6 we read concerning Saul: "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." Here we see a man who was turned into another man by the Spirit of God, and yet we read in I Samuel 16:14 how this same man apostatized and went away into hopeless sin and rebellion against God: "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." Here we see plainly where the Spirit of God deserted him. And why did it desert him? For the same reason that it will desert any Christian who trifles with God and goes into sin. (Read also I Samuel 15:19.) "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel" (vs. 26).

In I Kings 11:4 are these words: "It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." Here we see how Solomon, the wisest of men, became an apostate through unbelief and disobedience.

While we recognize that the mode of salvation under the Old Testament was different from that under the New, we have not felt it necessary to go into that part, as the essential principle of apostasy through disobedience holds true in both; and that is the point we wish to emphasize.

We find one of the most striking of all apostates mentioned in Acts 1:17: "He was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry." It was Judas who was here said to have obtained part of the holy ministry of Christ. Many people say that Judas was never saved. In saying this they deny flatly the plain statement of the Word of God: "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place" (Acts 1:25). Here we see plainly that Judas fell from his ministry and apostleship, and if one of the apostles of Jesus Christ could fall, there is no minister living today who cannot also fall through unbelief and sin.

In I Timothy 1:19-20 we read: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." Here we see that Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of their faith by putting away faith and a good conscience. If they did that, so will any disobedient Christian today. In Revelation 2:4-5 is this admonition: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Here we read of people who have left their first love, have fallen, and must repent and do their first works or have their light extinguished forever.

One of the greatest fallacies of the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is found in the supposition that a Christian can wander off into sin and still be a Christian, that he can sin and yet not fall. People who teach this doctrine



would shudder at the thought of teaching that it is impossible to sin. But we assert that to say it is impossible to fall away from grace is exactly the same thing as saying that it is impossible to sin, for to sin is to fall, as the Apostle John plainly teaches us in I John 3:8-10: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

This text does not mean that it is physically impossible for a Christian to sin; it simply means that it is morally impossible for a Christian to sin and remain a Christian in a state of salvation. This is emphasized in I John 5:24: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." If more evidence were needed from the Word of God, it is plainly shown us where the Scriptures teach the possibility of the reclamation of backsliders. In James 5:19-20 we read: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." The Apostle here views the possibility of one of the members of the church, a saved follower of Christ, erring from the truth. If such a calamity befalls, this person should be converted. Before he is reclaimed he is a sinner covered with a multitude of sins and in a state of spiritual death. The Apostle John taught the same truth when he said: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death" (I John 5:16-17). Here we have an exhortation to pray for the reclamation and restoration of backsliders.

The material available is so abundant that we have been compelled to select only a small part of the possible texts which lie before us. But we feel convinced that these texts have made it perfectly plain that there is eternal security for all believers only in the life of obedience and faith. If they live such a life, nobody, not even Satan, can snatch them out of the Father's hand. But if they fail to live this life of faith and of obedience, they will cut themselves off from the grace of God and, if unrepentant, will perish forever.

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# The Meaning of Salvation

By Charles Ewing Brown

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## Chapter 10

### HOW TO KEEP SAVED

A famous professor at Harvard University used to begin his lectures with a suggestion that each student look around him and take note that before the course was finished the man on his right and the man on his left would both be "flunked" out of the course, meaning by this that two-thirds of the students would be eliminated and only one-third allowed to pass. The intention of the professor was to put his students sharply on their guard that each of them might do his utmost to be counted in the successful one-third who maintained a creditable standing in the class. The fact that the standards of the school were so high that only one-third could pass the test was supposed to reflect great credit upon the school. Is it not strange that people take the same line of reasoning to set up a standard of condemnation and reproach of the gospel of Christ? It is a standing accusation against Christianity that there are so many hypocrites and backsliders. People pretend to think there is not much to it because so few "hold out," as they say, and so many fall away. Knowing the weakness and frailty of human nature, we praise a great university because it rejects the many and graduates the few, but we condemn Christianity because there are few that be saved. The reason that only a comparative few pass the standards of Harvard University is because its standards are high; and the reason only a few, comparatively, are saved and even a lesser few hold out to the end is because "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way ... and few there be that find it." Or to quote another text: "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

William James once said something to the effect that it is better that people, even for once in their lives, have a great vision of the possibilities of grace and high noble living though they fall away from that standard, than never to have sensed such possibilities at all. Nevertheless, we are sure that those who have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, and have felt the delicious thrill of the grace of God, must hold a keen and anxious desire to maintain their standing in that amazing grace and must cherish a desire to make progress therein.

#### THE BURDEN OF DISCIPLINE

Once I knew a boy as lively as a squirrel whose mother nearly broke his heart by compelling him to come in from the ball game and the enthusiastic play with the boys and sit in the prison-like enclosure of the room, pounding the keys of a piano until he was sick with disgust at the very word music. But the mother was wiser than the boy thought, for the years swiftly passed and this young man became one of the most versatile and talented musicians I have ever seen. He could play almost any instrument and he reveled in music as a bird revels in the glorious sunlight of a summer day. The mother knew that resolution, a strong will, and good intentions would not make her son a musician. Discipline was required. In the same way we must remind all young Christians that they may not save themselves by strength of will, by iron resolution, by strong decision. A certain amount of discipline is necessary in order to develop music, scholarship, or any other worthwhile calling to the point where it is a habitual joy; but through a misunderstanding of science and a lack of religious training many young Christians have fallen into the slipshod idea that all that is necessary for the maintenance of the Christian life is simply the conduct described by conventional morality. Spiritual religion is more than mere conventional morality. It is friendship with God, and while no ceremony can bring one into friendship with God, it is true that certain practices of spiritual devotion will deepen and increase the friendship and fellowship with God which is initiated by regeneration.

#### THE AWAKENING OF LOVE

Into our home five children were born. One died at the age of four. There is no sweeter memory than the experience of waking one of these babies when it became necessary to do so. As I bent over the sweet little innocent face I knew that



there was nothing but love for me in that heart, but it was latent, or sleeping, love. Then I would awaken the child and she would open her little eyes, look up into my face, see who it was, smile, and then put her arms around my neck and hug me tightly. The love which had been sleeping in her heart had wakened and had become active, and through that activity it grew with the passing years and became stronger. If I had been forced to go away while that little child was asleep and had not returned for fifteen or twenty years, when I came back I would have found that that love had slept so long it had died away entirely. And to me

this is a parable of prayer. Our heavenly Father bends over us, as it were, each morning, and as we awaken we look into his face and gaze into his eyes; our love awakens and manifests itself in prayer, communion, and praising the beauty of holiness and exalting the love that redeemed us.

'Tis blest to rise, O Lord, and join  
With nature's minstrelsy.  
To hymn Thy praise at early morn,  
And offer thanks to Thee.

Touched by Thy hand of love, we wake,  
And rise from sweet repose;  
Thy praise shall first the silence break,  
Thy peace within us flows.

The love is always in our hearts but it grows stronger as it awakens from time to time and expresses itself in fruitful, refreshing, and passionate communion with God. I believe that nearly all backsliders begin to fail first at this point: they cannot find time to pray. Many of them are frightened off by the idea that a Christian must pray three or four hours at a time in order really to make a successful prayer; whereas the length of the prayer is not so important as the habit of praying repeatedly and at certain set intervals and giving oneself enough time to pray from the heart in communion with God. Books on prayer and devotional works will encourage and promote the life of prayer. They are certainly as important in the life of a Christian as scientific books are to a student of science.

Perhaps we all need to be reminded that the greatest of all devotional books is the Bible. Some people are afraid to try to read the Bible; they think it will involve such a vast labor of scholarly study that they cannot afford to pick up the habit. After spending a long time in the study of the Bible in the original languages and with all scholarly helps available in this age, I would like to disabuse the minds of young Christians of the feeling that the Bible is too deep and too hard for a common person to get anything from it. I would advise young converts, regardless of the extent of their education, to begin reading the Bible. First of all, I should say begin reading with the New Testament -- simply read it as you would read any other book, and that means not merely a few verses at a time... Read whole books of the Bible consecutively, and when possible read a whole book through at one time. Most of the books of the New Testament can be read through in less time than one gives to the daily newspaper; and the whole New Testament is not larger than the average city Sunday newspaper. After a person has read the New Testament for some time it is likely that he will wish to study it more systematically, but we have not space to discuss that here. I would suggest that you get a copy of Introduction to the New Testament, by Dr. Adam W. Miller, and read it along with the New Testament.

## FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SAINTS

It is surprising what mechanical ideas some people have about church, fellowship, and worship. They think of the church as a massive institution taking much and giving little, requiring its people to deliver to it a maximum of money and of time. How foolish and vain such ideas are to spiritually-minded Christians! Take your own home as an illustration. Is that home an institution which holds you with iron bands? By no means. Every home in America is as frail as a bird's nest, so far as its power to hold its members by compulsion is concerned. Our homes are as strong as granite castles because they serve us. We find there the things which we need and for which we long with passionate devotion. A man loves his home; he loves its peace, its fellowship, and the sense of affection which crowns it with grace and blessing. He loves it so well that he is willing to work every working day of his life in order to maintain it, and when tragedies of life separate him from that home his heart turns back toward it with a pain that constitutes almost the greatest suffering of mortal life. These reflections should teach us the meaning of the church, of fellowship, and of the blessedness of corporate acts of worship.



We do not go to church because the church demands something of us. We go because it gives us something. We do not give our money to the church because the church charges us so much; we give our money because the ministry which the church maintains brings us rich benefits that are sweeter than life itself.

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord," said David, and this is certainly the ideal of all vigorous, healthy, normal religious life. But if we have sunk to the point where prayer, reading the Bible, and church fellowship are a burden to us, it is already time to arouse ourselves and begin to open our hearts to the spiritual influence which will make the Christian life a joy and a blessing. One of these days we doubtless shall be carried dead into the house of worship. What a pity it will be if those who file past our open coffin shall not know whose face they see except as it is announced by the pastor!

## THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

No doubt one of the greatest hindrances of Christian discipline of prayer, Bible reading, and public worship is that so many people regard these as the whole end and object of the Christian life; and looking at it in that light, they casually suppose that the game is not worth the candle. They regard all this discipline as an unnecessary yoke around the neck. It is a great pity that with all our preaching we ministers have not sufficiently indoctrinated the people that all this is not the end but the beginning of the Christian life. These are not the things for which people live. They do these things to strengthen themselves and to learn really how to live the Christian life in the fullest sense of the word. The Christian life is realized in a fellowship with God flowing like rivers in the desert through a man's heart every day, but these fruitful streams will dry up if they help the individual alone. In order to keep the channels open they must flow out of his life into the lives of others. The real work of the Christian life is a witness for Christ on the part of the believer wherever he lives and works and goes. Young men in school are taught to be doctors, but all of that would be in vain if, when they graduated, they did not practice medicine. The discipline of the Christian life is simply the preparation to practice Christianity in the office, the home, the shop, and in private and public life, in every place where a brave and true witness to the truth will serve to heal the hurt of humanity and make the world a better place in which to live.

## THE POISE OF POWER

All genuinely earnest and spiritual Christians have at some time strong temptation to go into the extremes of fanaticism. They follow the theory of the man who, when given a bottle of medicine by his physician and told to take one teaspoonful three times a day reasoned that if a little was good, more would be better and so took the whole bottle at one dose and nearly killed himself. Certainly, no one can ever do too much for his Lord, but experienced Christians have found that success in the Christian life is not won by violent extremes. One might reason that if it is good to read the Bible, why not read it all day? and is it not more important to read the Bible all day than to go to work? But if one should read the Bible all day, would it not be better to pray all day, and so on? If we pray all day we shall have to give up reading the Bible. If we read the Bible all day we shall miss visiting the sick. If we visit the sick all day we shall miss earning a living for our family.

Regarding giving, some people say that if it is good to give a tenth, why not give 50 per cent or 75 per cent, possibly 90 per cent. I would not be foolish or wicked enough to say that nobody ought ever to give 90 per cent of his income to the Lord, but I have about reached the conclusion that if we can bring Christians up to give 10 per cent we shall be doing enough for this generation. Moreover, if a Christian is a steward he has some responsibility regarding the capital which he is supposed to invest and develop.

All of us have seen the harm which comes from fanatical extremes. People who start out to force themselves by will power to pray three hours a day or to practice other extreme forms of discipline nearly always wind up by making a failure; consequently, they become embittered and accuse others of being as big failures as they are themselves. The Christian life is the life of loving fellowship with God. Such a life is made easy because streams of power pour into the heart of the believer from those fountains which lie in the heart of God. God is not served by resolute will-worship, but by loving devotion. If one will only stop to observe a great engine of perhaps a hundred thousand horsepower he will note the smoothness and noiselessness with which that engine runs. That is a symbol of the poise and balance of a victorious Christian life.



There is simply no way whereby we can do more for the Lord, and give more to the Lord, than by living in such close fellowship with him that we will grow in grace and so increase our capacity for service.

We think of the painters of the great churches in the Middle Ages. One painter is so eager to do more that he works sixteen hours a day, but he also becomes weary physically and his work is not of the best. Another man is as eager as the first to do his best and to give the most possible, but he eats wisely, sleeps enough, and rests. Observing these laws of health, he can work only five or six hours a day, but his work is so fine that it has much greater value than that of the other artist and will have the admiration of men for a thousand years to come. That man did more because he worked wisely and tempered his passion with patience. The world of our time needs skillful, faithful, and devoted workers in order to promote the interest of the kingdom of God, but such people must be sold out to God and must realize that they are going to spend every day of their lives growing in the knowledge of the truth and laboring fervently for Christ. But what is the goal of human life? It has been variously described throughout all time. Some have said that it is to know the good; for, they said, if anyone knows the good he will do it and failure to do the good is due to lack of knowledge. Of course, there is a grain of truth in this theory and yet all our experience has shown us that men will sin against the brightest light; they will rebel in the full knowledge of what they are doing, as in the case of Judas Iscariot, for example. Others have said that the attainment of power is the object of life. That object has been described as the good of society, the happiness of all men. Others have affirmed that obedience to law is the aim of life.

There is an eternal right, they say, and it is man's duty to pursue it. Happiness, some contend, is the goal of life; for others, it is the vision of God; for still others, it is the development of all one's powers.

When we put all these standards of life to the test we find that they are all good as far as they go, but they do not touch the very central point. The supreme end and object of life is to love God perfectly and to love humanity as ourselves. So the goal is not happiness, although this is the only way to be happy. It is not primarily the keeping of a set of laws, although the man who attains this goal will keep all laws. It is love -- love to God and love to our fellow man.

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