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### The Bridge Over the River of Sin

A. B. Maston

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# HOLY - SPIRIT

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GOD'S FULFILLED PROMISES

TIME

ETERNITY



# The Bridge Over the River of Sin

A. B. MASTON

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"An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; . . . the wayfaring man though unlearned shall not err therein."—Isa. xxv. 8.

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THINK you will acknowledge that the above is a very striking figure, and will not only see that sin may be compared to a river, but that sin is a river, a great stream, carrying to ruin thousands of men and women every year. Sin is debasing and destructive—"the wages of sin is death." But my object is to show that there is a way of escape, and that if you are not saved from sin, when Christ shall come to claim His own, then it will be your own fault. You will find that the great majority of people

really want and expect to be saved, but their whole lives are taken up in wondering why some other way won't do just as well as God's way. Mr. A. comes up to the bridge and sees it standing in all its completeness, but begins to say: "I don't see the use in this plank, and this stone in the butment;" and winds up by remarking: "I don't see why I can't get across some other way." So he erects his little boat, just big enough for himself, and scarcely that, and pulls for the other shore. The first little extra breeze that comes along, the whole thing goes to smash, and the occupant sinks to rise no more. But there is no occasion for taking this risk, for God has constructed "an highway" so broad and plain, leading above all this, that the world may pass over in perfect safety. This bridge was not built in a day. 1. The butments were erected, standing on the shores of time and eternity. These butments are the love and the power of God. God not only loved the world, but He "so loved" it that He gave His Son to redeem it. With all reverence I say, if God had simply loved us, without manifesting that love to us, we would have been no better off. Just so if you say "I love God," and do not prove that love by obedience to His son, your love is vain and empty.—(John xiv. 15.) 2. After the butments come the stringers, which are God's fulfilled promises. First, this promise was thrown across the stream: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." This was strengthened in time by the promise to Abram, "In thee and thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This was made stronger by the Mosaic dispensation, and this was all rivetted and welded together in one great chain, by the fulfilment of all these promises in the fourth and last act of the great drama of redemption, "God so loved the world that He gave His Son." All bridges must have some way of approach. "But how shall I get to the top?" Paul says: "Whosoever shall call upon the

name of the Lord shall be saved." But the question arose: "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" And how shall they believe on Him in whom they have not heard?" He knew this to be impossible, so He sums up the whole matter in this way: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—(Rom. x. 13, 14, 17.) The hearing, then, of the word of God which Christ commanded His disciples to preach will bring you to the top ready to step on to the first plank of Faith. The Holy Spirit constitutes the railing of the bridge, and comes down from God with the word, reaches our hearts in the word, and never leaves us while we follow the word. "But why have the plank of faith?" There are many reasons; I have space for just one: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him (God), and he that cometh to God must believe that He is." I have met people who think that this plank (Faith) ought to be sufficient, that it ought to be placed end for end and reach from butment to butment. When a lad, I had, with brothers and sisters, to attend school two miles from home. There was a good sized creek running between our house and the school. The first winter after moving into the neighborhood father simply felled a large tree across the stream for a foot log. We managed to get over in some way, many times falling off. The next winter father flattened the top of the log and put a railing on one side. We managed better that winter, only averaging about two wettings a week. Next winter father, with some of the neighbors, built a large bridge over the creek. We did not think of going over the foot log after we got the bridge. The man who pleads for this one plank alone would have us go to heaven on the foot log of faith, when our Father has erected this broad and safe bridge. But we will take a step forward on to the plank of repentance. In one of Peter's memorable sermons he used this language: "God . . . now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." God has placed Faith and Repentance side by side, and I see no reason why I should make a distinction. We will ask you now to step forward on to the plank of Confession. This plank, like some of the others, has had a hard fight for its place, but I think a few Gospel nails will fasten it down securely. "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God."—(Luke xii. 8.) That is one; we will put that in the opposite end. "If thou shalt confess the Lord Jesus, . . . thou shalt be saved." We will put this one in the middle. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—(Rom. x. 10.) This one will hold down the other end. This will do to show that our Father has given this plank a place on the bridge. The last plank before coming to the pier is that of Baptism. There has been some dispute about the place that this plank should occupy, some saying that it ought to be down in the world, some that it ought to be on the heavenward side of the pier; others think that the place that I have indicated is proper, while others still, think that it can be dispensed with altogether. Who is right? and how are we to decide? If it can't be decided by the plain statements of Scripture, it can't be decided at all. There has been much written on this subject, but I shall get all the proof I

vant from one passage of Scripture. Here it is: "He (Christ) said unto them (the disciples), Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved. . . ."—(Mark xvi. 15, 16.) This passage makes several things very clear. 1st. That it ought to be there somewhere, because Christ has put it there. 2nd. That it comes after the preaching of the Gospel and after faith; so it does not belong down in the world—not to a period of one's life when they cannot hear and believe the Gospel. 3rd. That it comes before our entrance "into Christ," as it is here set down as a means or medium of our approach to Christ. Salvation is promised on the condition of faith and baptism, because, as we learn from other parts of the Scripture, they bring us "into Christ. From this last plank we step on to the pier (Christ), standing as the "Rock of Ages" in the midst of the dangerous stream. "But do you think if a man is not baptised he will not be saved?" I don't want to put myself in the position of a judge, but I will say this much in answer to your question: Looking at it from the simple standpoint of God's word, I don't think that you can be saved without it, from the simple fact that you now know your duty, and from this time forward (until you obey Christ) will be living in open defiance to His will. "Yes, but you know we can't all see alike." I am not so certain about that matter, so we will have to examine it a minute. Suppose the Governor of your colony should issue a proclamation saying that all who should go up to Government House on a certain day should receive a gift of £20, do you think that you would fail to see that at a glance? Not only that, but you would see it just like others. God has issued a proclamation saying to His disciples "Go and preach the Gospel. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." . . . which is just as plain as any proclamation the Governor ever issued, and if you don't understand it, it is because you don't want to do so. "But it don't say, 'He that is not baptised shall not be saved.'" Neither does the Governor say, "He that does not come up to Government House shall not receive the £20," but everybody that reads the proclamation knows that without being told. "But am I saved now?" Saved from the sins of the past, coupled with the promise that if you are faithful you shall be saved in heaven. In order to this future salvation you must proceed on your journey over this bridge, adding to your faith, virtue (excellence); to your virtue, knowledge, &c.; going on step by step in the Christian life until you reach the "shining gates of the shining city"—the "perfect day." My dear friend, where are you standing? Broadly stated, there are two positions—out of Christ, and "in Christ." If you have stopped short of the pier, you are out of Christ, and in a dangerous and unsafe position. If you have stepped from plank to plank till you have reached the pier, you are "in Christ," and if you are faithful you shall receive a crown of life.