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Man's Need For A Savior

BY HOMER HAILEY



There is a general disposition today to wink at sin; a proneness to overlook its enormity as God views it. There is a universal need for a more adequate understanding of the blighting and destructive influence of sin, of its deep curse upon the earth, and for a realization of the ultimate end which sin brings upon the individual and the race.

In considering the matter of becoming a Christian, one must be caused to realize his need for a Saviour, and that Jesus Christ is the only answer to that need. It is useless to talk about salvation so long as one has no consciousness of needing salvation. And when I speak of salvation from physical or financial difficulty into which the individual may have become entangled, but of salvation from sin. The modern preaching of a social gospel, with whatever good it may have done toward relieving the physical needs of men, fails completely when it overlooks the need of salvation from sin, and the blood of Jesus Christ as the sole remedy in that salvation.

First, we note that God's definition of sin clearly reveals man's absolute need for a Saviour. Since all sin is ultimately against God, for it is His law that is violated, only God can properly declare what sin is. When David had committed his great crime in the matter of Uriah and Bath-sheba, although the sin was against both of them and against society as a whole, he nevertheless declared in his cry to God, "Against thee, only thee, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight; that thou may be justified

when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest" (Psalm 51:4).

The premise being true that sin is against God, it follows that only the Bible, the word of God, can define it. Paul the apostle has said, "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:11-13). Therefore, God must speak if we are to know certainly what sin is, and what God's attitude is toward it. Hence, we let God speak on the subject.

SIN MAKES MAN'S NEED REAL

From what God has said, we learn that sin is of two forms: a lack of conformity unto by omission, or the transgression of some divine law. John wrote, "Whosoever transgresseth the law committeth sin, for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4); and again, "all unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). While James wrote, "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). One speaks of sin as the "transgression of the law"; the other, of sin as leaving undone what is right and good. This violation may be in:

THOUGHT, when that thought becomes settled, taking the form of purpose or intent, as when Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said, That thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27,28). Here the thought becomes an intention, the act is purposed in the heart. This is sin.

It may be in **WORD OF MOUTH**, for Jesus said of our words, "And I say unto you that every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36,37). The Bible teaches that lying, slander, railing, filthy speech, cursing, and such, is sin, and for these men shall give account unto God; it is with Him we have to deal in the matter of sin.

Or one may sin in the developing of an ATTITUDE or DISPOSITION. He may sin in the neglect of doing the thing that is right, or in ommitting to do what God would have him do.

Then finally, in the ACTIONS of the individual, in the DEEDS OF THE BODY, one may transgress the law of God. Jesus said, "For the Son of Man shaul come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matt. 16:27); while the apostle Paul wrote, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Since, therefore sin is an action on the part of the individual, either in thought, intent, disposition, word or deed, and no deed once ommitted can be undone, man stands in need of a means of justification, or reconciliation to the God whom he has disobeyed, and for whom he has, by sin, become estranged. This, only God can provide.

EACH MUST BEAR HIS OWN GUILT

Another point needing emphasis is, Sin, being an act of the individual, the guilt of the transgression cannot be inherited by one individual from another; one may inherit certain weaknesses, but he is innocent of any crime itself committed by his forbears. This God has made clear when He said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20).

We conclude that God's definition of sin: guilt, the consequence of transgressing His law, or of leaving undone that which He wills should be done, clearly declares man's need for a Saviour.

A second truth we point out just now is that the universality of sin points to man's need for a saviour. It was the conclusion of the writer of Ecclesiastes, "Surely there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20). The writer of Romans declared the same truth even more positively when he said, "What then? are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)? No, in no wise; for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks,

that they are all under sin; as it is written. There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:9, 10). "For all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God" (v. 23). While John said, "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19). This is not pessimism; it is truth confirmed by history and our own experience.

SIN IS UNIVERSAL

Such a universal condition confirms the claim of the prophet, who, some six hundred years before the birth of Christ exclaimed, "O Jehovah, I know that the way of men is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). With all, Jews and Gentiles, under sin, all needed a Saviour; Sin made man's need for a Saviour an imperative one.

And now we make a third observation: the consequence and ultimate end of sin, and the sacrifice made for salvation from it, all declare man's absolute need for a Saviour.

In considering the consequence of sin, we are impressed first of all with the fact that sin separates man from God. In the beginning, when Adam and Eve sinned, God withdrew His presence from them, placing them outside the garden. Sinful man could not stand before God; nor could God bear sin in His fellowship. To the citizens of Jerusalem in his day, Isaiah said, "Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 58:1-2). A New Testament writer declared, "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:12). Apart from God, man is separated from Life, Light, and the Eternal Source of all that is good and holy. He is without God, having no hope in the world.

Not only does man bring about his separation from God by sin, but sin also incurs the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. Having enumerated a group of sins: fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting, the apostle to the Gentiles continues: "Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6). Conditions such as we have experi-

enced the past few years are the consequences of SIN. Th inability of man to pull himself up by his own boot straps makes his need for a Saviour imperative.

INEVITABLE PENALTY SHOWS NEED FOR SAVIOR

When the ultimate end, i. e., the "wages" of sin is considered, again our conclusion that man must have a saviour is inevitable. Peculiar to the materialistic conception of life today is the tendency to deny any need for preparation beyond death; "one world at a time" is the flippant shrug of the materialist. But God's word, which has stood the infidel attacks of the centuries, still declares, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20); "For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23); "And if any was not found written in the book of life he was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15); and once more, "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). It is the word of God against the vapories of materialistic philosophy, which philosophies have changed with each succeeding generation.

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE SHOWS NEED FOR SAVIOR

And finally, the very sacrifice of Christ for sin testifies to man's absolute need for a Saviour. Kneeling with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, and standing beside Him as he hanged upon the cross, we are made to realize the intense sinfulness of sin, and the utter helplessness of man to save himself apart from a Saviour provided by Jehovah. Having left the disciples, "he went forward a little, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, Father, if it be possible, let his cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wiltAgain a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. 26: 39, 42). Luke adds, "And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat become as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:43, 44). Here, one of the great battles of redemption was fought. Man must have a Saviour; there was no other way than that of sacrifice; the price

must be paid; the love of God must be revealed; the exceeding sinfulness of sin must be made known; the Son of God must yield to the completion of the task set before Him. He must, and did, drink the cup.

From the Garden we follow Him to the cross, where the need is manifested as the exceeding sinfulness of sin is revealed in the spirit of Jesus' enemies. The heartlessness of their mockery, the bitterness of their taunts, the cruelty of sufferings inflicted upon Him who had known no sin, acclaim the depths to which sin will debase, and the need of man for a Saviour to save him from such depravity.

During the past few years, even till now, that spirit of depravity is seen among men in so many parts of the world. Men have arisen as the acclaimed saviours of nations, of civilizations, of certain ideologies, only to lead the world into greater chaos. It is the old-age story, man's need for a Saviour. Not for a new saviour, but for the salvation provided for man in and through Jesus Christ, nineteen centuries ago. He seeks to save men from sin, from the lusts and depravity of their own hearts. He seeks to change, not the mere circumstances of man, but the heart of man. He seeks the reconciliation of man to God. In order to procure this, He sacrificed, not others, but Himself.

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