

SALVATION EXPLAINED

WHO AM I ? . . WHERE DID I COME FROM ? . . WHERE AM I GOING ?

It seems we humans will try anything and everything to answer (or *avoid* answering) these questions. Yet, until they are answered, an unfulfilled need resides in our hearts. Try as we may to fill the need with various mixtures of sex, society, success, and religion, these earthly endeavors seem to satisfy not even those who have them in great abundance.

Blaise Pascal, the great mathematician and physicist, said it this way: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man that cannot be filled by any *created* thing, but only by God the *Creator*, made known through Jesus Christ."

THE ONLY IMPORTANT QUESTION

Everyone knows from childhood that death is certain. The next time you are in a crowd of people, take note of the fact that every single person you see, even the baby in its mother's arms, *will die*. To the honest soul, the very thought of the certainty of death is horrifying. We may try to cover this horror with all manner of distractive pursuits, but the fact remains that it is from this horror that we all need rest and peace of mind.

There are many good things we can do with our lives. We can visit widows, orphans, the sick and the imprisoned. We can feed and house the poor and victims of disaster. We can find cures to great illnesses. All of these things we should do. But, the overshadowing problem still remains: Everyone we love and help is going to eventually die. Moreover, scientists now tell us that even the physical universe will eventually die.

So, our *only hope* (if there is any) is in what happens *after* we die. Our only hope *must* reside in the spiritual realm. Each of us must settle the question of eternity in our own hearts. Then, the one good thing you can do with your life that will have any really lasting significance is to help others settle this same question of eternity. In fact, the purpose of life is to know the answer to the question of eternity and to be an ambassador of wisdom to others who are honestly seeking the ultimate truth. To fulfill the purpose of life, we must know and follow the One who teaches the answer.

Anyone who has ever been near the point of death and yet lived will tell you that the question of eternity is the *only* question that matters. Friends, family, money, politics, religion aside; the *only* thing that matters in the end is, "What happens after I die?"

We need more than just a wish and a dream. We need more than just a prayer. We need to **know** what awaits us, even as the men of the Bible *knew*. We need to find *rest* unto our souls.

HOW TO FIND REST ON YOUR OWN

When asked how one gets to Heaven, many respond with suggestions of doing or being good. Jesus' death on the cross is rarely mentioned. It is as though we have forgotten this sacrifice or no longer understand it. God's hand seems to be left entirely out of the big picture by many. What many are saying is, in effect, "I believe I will make it to Heaven, based upon how *good* I've been" or "I probably will *not* make it to Heaven, based upon how *bad* I've been."

Who, then, is to be our standard? Must we be better than, say, Billy Graham to enter Heaven? Or how about Osama bin Laden? Or your own father? What do the scriptures teach? Is Abraham our example? How about Mary? Or David or Daniel? No, God gives us only one standard: *Sinless perfection* as revealed in the life of his only son, Jesus Christ. Thus, to enter Heaven on your own, you must equal in every way the person of the Lord Jesus Christ from the day you are born until the day you die:

God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were **any** that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is **none** that doeth good, no, not one.
[Psalms 53:2-3]

Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am **pure** from my sin?
[Proverbs 20:9]

(for there is **no** man that sinneth not)
[1 Kings 8:46]

THE PROBLEM WITH MAN

The basic problem with humanity is voiced in all cultures. Every known religion and philosophy attempts to deal with our sense of guilt which stems from the fact that we all know that each of us fails to live up to his or her own low standards, let alone the calling of God.

Being God's only son, Jesus is known as "the glory of God." A simple reading of the gospels will clearly demonstrate that we all fail to measure up to his example . . .

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.
[Romans 3:23]

The psychologist may place the blame on someone else. Hindus and various Buddhists conclude that the problem is an illusion, because *everything* is an illusion. The atheist may trivialize the guilt, boasting that *God* is an illusion. The remaining faiths will try to cover the shame by doing good. Yet others are so convinced of their guilt as to indulge in further and deeper sin with no apology lest they be called hypocrites. What madness!

Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

[Proverbs 20:6]

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

[1 John 1:8-10]

IT GETS WORSE

While it may be obvious that man is sinful and in need of forgiveness and cleansing, the far deeper truth is that man is actually *dead* and in need of *life*. Amazingly, of all writings which claim to be sacred, only the Bible seems to address this issue.

The Hebrew word for "man" is *adam*, from whence is taken the name for the original man. Adam was and is all of humanity. Everything you now are was once in Adam, all 46 chromosomes of you. Likewise, your soul was once in Adam and is derived from Adam. Likewise, your spirit. Adam was created as three in one (body, soul, spirit) in God's triune image (Father, Son, Holy Ghost).

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die**.

[Genesis 2:16-17]

Adam (and you *in* Adam) ate and died that very day. He died spiritually, yet not physically until many years later. This is how sin and death were introduced and are still passed on to us. Mankind is born with a sinful nature comprised of a live body and soul, but an unborn spirit. We, therefore, naturally disobey God. Thus,

. . . by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . .

[Romans 5:12]

Sin is simply that which is in opposition to the character of God which originates in temptation to lust (sexual or otherwise). If you feel separated from God, this is the reason. Lust causes sin, which causes death:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth **death**.

[James 1:13-15]

Death is, in fact, the just reward, the *wages* of sin. Death is exactly what we *deserve* through sin. No one (Christians included) *deserves* eternal life, no, not one. Eternal life is a free *gift*:

For the **wages** of sin is **death**; but the **gift** of God is eternal **life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.
[Romans 6:23]

SIN MUST FIRST BE TAKEN

Since death results from sin, it follows that sin must first be dealt with and removed before this new eternal life is granted. In the presence of sin, all life is temporal. If sin were not first taken away, then any new life would soon be corrupted and die. The removal of sin is the first reason Jesus came:

. . . John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which **taketh away** the sin of the world.
[John 1:29]

And ye know that he was manifested to **take away** our sins; and in him is no sin.
[1 John 3:5]

He is the propitiation (satisfaction of sacrifice) for our sins, acceptable to God because in him was neither spot nor blemish. Thus, the mission of Jesus was *salvation*, not *condemnation*:

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins.
[1 John 4:10]

And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the **propitiation** for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.
[1 John 2:1-2]

For God sent **not** his Son into the world to **condemn** the world; but that the world through him might be **saved**.
[John 3:17]

It should be clear that Jesus died not only for his followers, but also for the ungodly. *Every* sin throughout all history was taken into him on the cross. The sins of the 1000 most evil men of all time amount to no more than a drop in the ocean to him. It is the height of arrogance for one to say he has sinned too much for God's forgiveness. His love for even the vilest of sinners was commended (demonstrated) on the cross:

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the **ungodly**. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet **sinners**, Christ died for us.
[Romans 5:6-8]

Furthermore, in reality, it was sin *itself* which was nailed to the cross as Jesus *became* sin, as it is written,

For he hath made him to **be** sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
[2 Corinthians 5:21]

WHAT THEN MUST WE DO?

God gives us a choice and the ability to choose, then woos us to make the *right* choice:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may **live**:
[Deuteronomy 30:19]

Now that God has reconciled the world (returned all humanity to a state whereby new life may be imparted), *our* part is to be reconciled to God (freely receive this gift of new life). Yet, our ability to receive and return his love requires a miracle. It requires prayer:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who **hath reconciled** us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry 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**.
[2 Corinthians 5:17-20]

To be reconciled to God, we must turn from our sin of unbelief:

The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that 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**. For the scripture saith, Whosoever **believeth** on him shall not be ashamed.
[Romans 10:8-11]

Jesus explained that this reconciliation requires not merely a human effort of self-righteousness, but a miraculous new birth. In fact, Jesus teaches that the *only* way to see Heaven is to be *born again*:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except** a man be born again, he **cannot** see the kingdom of God.
[John 3:3]

LIFE IN ABSENCE OF SIN IS ETERNAL

Where sin has first been taken away (through the shedding of Jesus' blood) and the new birth has been granted (through his resurrection), the resulting new life is *eternal*.

Soon after receiving the new birth of your spirit which first died in Adam, you will almost certainly be told by well-meaning brethren that the new life is not really eternal in that it is possible to "lose your salvation." Being seduced, they seduce others. Adopt an attitude of prayer for these who simply do not understand God's sealed *promise* to believers.

. . . after that you **believed**, you were **sealed** with that holy spirit of **promise** until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.
[Ephesians 1:13-14]

And this is the **promise** that he hath **promised** us, even **eternal** life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that **seduce** you.
[1 John 2:25-26]

It is not within our power to always remain faithful to God. *God's* power will always keep us. *He* is the faithful one, while *we* are simply those . .

. . . who are **kept** by the **power of God** through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
[1 Peter 1:5]

But the **Lord** is faithful, who shall stablish you, and **keep** you from evil.
[2 Thessalonians 3:3]

For it is **God** which worketh in you both to **will** and to **do** of his good pleasure.
[Philippians 2:13]

God *promises* to continue this new work in you until the day of Jesus Christ, when we shall see him face to face - not just until the day you sin against him or try to forsake him. He is both *able* and *willing* to preserve you as his own:

. . . he which hath begun a good work in you **will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ** . . .
[Philippians 1:6]

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be **preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also **will do it**.
[1 Thessalonians 5:23-24]

It should be clear, therefore, that *nothing*, not even we ourselves, can separate us from the love of God. If we stray, he promises to never leave our side:

I will **never** leave thee, nor forsake thee.

[Hebrews 13:5]

. . . neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Romans 8:38-39]

Those who believe on the name of Jesus already *have* (present tense) *eternal life* (life that will *never* end). Moreover, it is given unto us that we may *know* these things to be true as God's promise (not that we would merely *hope* or *pray* for them to be true). It is also clear that those who do *not* have the Son, do *not* have this new life:

And this is the record, that God **hath given** to us **eternal life**, and this life is in his Son. **He that hath the Son hath life**; and **he that hath not the Son of God hath not life**. These things have I written unto you that **believe** on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have **eternal life**, and that ye may **believe** on the name of the Son of God.

[1 John 5:11-13]

THE HARMONY OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus said it this way:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **Take my yoke** upon you, and **learn of me**; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

[Matthew 11:28-30]

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.

[Revelation 3:20]

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

[John 3:16]

I am the resurrection, and the life: he that **believeth** in **me**, though he were **dead**, yet shall he **live**: and whosoever liveth and **believeth** in **me** shall **never** die. **Believest thou this?**

[John 11:25-26]