

Recovery

Matterhorn; Everest; Mountain peak of the Evangel, from which the whole of the divine purpose is perceived! He who spoke the universe into being absolved the guilt of His creatures. What guilt? What sin so heinous the entire race must be damned for eternity?

It was not a matter of "*heinousness*," but harmfulness. The consequence of the deed (or deeds) was the disintegration of the oneness between man and God, which was intrinsic to the spirit-nature of man, as created by God. This destruction of the spirit was the natural consequence of the defying of God in a rebel act, or process, perhaps, and not an arbitrary imposition of penalty. In a very human (and therefore limited) analogy, the defying of certain laws of nature may bring disintegrative consequences, apart from the imposition of penalties. Excessive use of alcohol, for example, while socially offensive and sometimes penalized, also brings physical disintegration as a natural consequence. As far as Adam and Eve were concerned the defying of God's instruction was certainly offensive to Him, but the inevitable consequence was the loss of His Spirit within—not so much an arbitrary penalty imposed by God, but a natural result of a defiant act, or acts. God's warning—"Ye shall die"—was more a statement of fact, than an imposing of sentence. The chain of events evolving out of their disobedience, confirmed the prediction. In rapid succession, events that resulted from souls without rudder or compass, reflected the kind of heinous behavior that brought about the judgment of the flood and the destruction of a society that had become so permeated with satanic evil, that there was no choice but the elimination *en masse* of the race of mankind thus corrupted.

We are accustomed to thinking of sin in terms of deeds of impiety, with each rated on a scale of relative abhorrence. Thus, when God says that the wages of sin is death, we want to know which sins. The habit of looking at sin, however, merely in terms of deeds of offense, tends to trivialize the sacrifice of Christ, and gives rise to the question, "*Why could not God have merely pronounced forgiveness apart from the sacrifice of Christ?*" As human beings, we are constantly doing this apart from any kind of personal sacrifice. Could not God have done the same?

It is thus essential that we see sin in its truest nature. While there are many interchangeable uses of the words for sin in both Old and New Testaments, the basic concept is "*missing the mark*," or "*going astray*." This is the essential meaning of the two Hebrew and Greek words used in referring to sin as a result of the edenic defiance. By their actions, Adam and Eve have not merely offended God, but dealt a death blow to their inner spirits. It was tantamount to the catastrophe of a ship losing its rudder at sea. Shipwreck was inevitable, given the raging storms evoked by the maniacal efforts of the rebel, Lucifer, to destroy the works of God.

Thus, the sacrifice of Christ was not merely an appeasement of the Deity, to soften His wrath, but rather a joining of the "*mortalized*" race, identifying with its corruptibility, entering into its death, and again throwing off the band's of death, thus leading the race back into life. For those who will accept it, this is the essence of salvation—not merely receiving divine absolution, but receiving

the gift of life—the recovery of the life that had been lost in the Fall. So salvation is a matter of recovery and not an excusing of offenses. Human beings can offer forgiveness, but only God can offer life. The sacrifice of Christ was indeed an act of cleansing or purification—an essential antecedent to the restoration of life—but it was more than simply the paying of a penalty.

Feelings of guilt are often included in the requirements of salvation. This has been a stumbling block for many who know that they have a need of some kind, but do not necessarily feel guilty of the disobedience of someone thousands of years in the past. Moreover, the sense of guilt in regard to personal offenses toward God can only be experienced in the light of the glory of Christ. Many people engage in unsound practices prior to conversion, which are the result of ignorance and lack of guideposts. One brought up in a world so void of guidelines to morality, can hardly be expected to attach guilt to their common practices. However, once one has received the Spirit into the heart, and guidelines are in place, then the matter of personal guilt comes into focus. Further, as one's appreciation of Christ increases, one's sensitivity to wrongdoing is proportionately increased. However, it must be noted here in passing, that carelessness in the personal life of a believer can lead to a dulling of that sensitivity, or as Paul has indicated a "*searing of the conscience.*" A diminishing of the input from Christ and an increasing input from the world, can bring this condition about. It is thus essential, as Hebrews tells us, for believers to maintain fellowship with other believers, as well as with Christ.

The subject of this essay is not the delineating of various kinds of sins and trespasses, but rather the focus on the magnitude of this simple statement—"*Having made a cleansing for sins!*" There is a great deal for Christians to learn about the meaning of sin and the practicing of piety, but this is dependent upon the initial receiving of new life and the recovery of the Spirit. "*The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit.*" In the receiving of life, we have made the essential leap from the kingdom of the world and Satan, to the kingdom of Christ. Once a part of the kingdom of Christ, we may then deal with the elements of life that are involved in walking with Him. Again, the incredible reality of the recovery of the Spirit is that we are now one with the God of the universe. As was pointed out in the previous essay, we are an integral part of His nature. As Peter has said, "*We are partakers of the divine nature*" (II Peter 1:4). The power and majesty of God is beyond all human imagination, but none of that is relevant to us, unless we become partakers of it, through the recovery of our spirits.

David Morsey

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