

THE CROSS - GOD'S ANSWER FOR SIN

INTRODUCTION

- A. I Pet. 2:18-25. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
- B. Sin Occasioned the Cross:
1. By man came sin.
 2. By sin came death.
 - a. Rom. 5:12. Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned --
 - b. Heb. 2:14-15. Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
 - c. Heb. 9:24-28. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another - He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

I. THE CROSS WITNESSES TO THE FACT - CERTAINTY OF SIN

- A. Isa. 53:6. As we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

1. Sin is leprosy of the inner man. "The race was contaminated in its infancy and the atmosphere of life was filled with the miasma of this awful disease.... The treatment for sin is a matter of revelation from God. Animals were slain and offered by divine command until Jesus came and laid down his life (John 10:18), that the sinner might be healed and live. But even with this absolute remedy, the perfect specific, for guilt, none can be cured unless they take the medicine; and the kind of medicine to take, which must be such as will counteract the poison of the infection, is determined by the nature of the disease. Man contracted sin by hearing and believing and obeying a lie, preached by the devil (Gen. 3:1-8), the father of lies (John 8:44), himself a *living lie*; and the only hope for the sinner is to undo this monumental mistake and expel this virus out of his soul by hearing and believing and obeying the truth revealed in Jesus Christ."

B. The Cross: We Cannot Minimize Sin.

NOTE: It seems quite obvious to me that the essential principle of sin is Selfishness. As such it is closely related to the will, from which in fact it cannot be disassociated. There never was a sin committed that was not the choice of self in preference to God. Every appeal that Satan made to the Savior, on the mount of temptation, was an appeal to self: first, to self-satisfaction, or to satisfy His physical self which hungered; second, to self-pride, or a suggestion that He appear in a miraculous demonstration, rather than by way of the Cross; and the third, an appeal to self-aggrandizement, offering Him all the kingdoms of this world if He would but fall down and worship the Tempter. It is significant that the only weapon which the Master used to defeat these subtle suggestions was the word of God, the revelation of God's will. His reply, in every case, was, "It is written," etc. (Matt. 4:1-11). Sin is the choice of self above God.

C. Freedom of Choice is Given to us All.

1. Whatever power of choice man has is determined by his own nature as it has been organized under the influences of heredity, environment, and, last but not least, idealism. Every normal being has the power of self-conscious reflection and choice. So long as this power to choose remains, the spiritual self is alive. When by continued practice of evil the power of self-determination is weakened and ultimately lost, man has committed spiritual suicide, and for him there is nothing left but hell.
2. Hell, however, was not prepared for man, but for "the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). Hell is the penitentiary of the moral universe. If man goes to hell it will be because, as Chrysostom was wont to say, he casts himself into it. Christianity provides the Ideal, the incentive, the magnet

sufficient to lure him onward and upward to the City of God (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32).

3. There is another thing the Scriptures point out most plainly, and that is: Sin is first a matter of motive, of intent, of desire, of purpose. To wish to murder a man is murder, and to lust is adultery. Here is the vast difference between sin and crime. Crime takes account only of the committed deed, of the completed action. Sin may be hidden; crime is overt. A declaration that might be made in passing is that sin is a transgression of the divine law. A thing may be a sin that is not a crime, but it is almost impossible to think of a crime that hasn't back of it some sin. "Sin," says John, "is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). This definition is quite comprehensive, and includes the sins both of commission and of omission (Jas. 4:17).
4. We do not affirm, nor do we believe, that any one is guilty previous to the exercise of personal choice. A guilty infant is a contradiction in terms. We do not believe that any individual act of sin is forced by circumstances or heredity upon a reluctant will. We do not doubt that it is in the power of every will to make the grand choice, habitually and predominantly, of good against evil. Sin, therefore, originates in selfishness, and is the choice of self and self's way, above God and God's way.

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin;
Each vict'ry will help you,
Some other to win;
Fight manfully onward,
Dark passions subdue;
Look every to Jesus,
He'll carry you through."
--H. R. Palmer.

II. THE CROSS IS REMEDY FOR SIN

- A. I John 1:7. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
 1. "Under the gospel we have one, and only one, great and all-meritorious ground of justification. That ground is the atoning blood of Christ." (Lard, Commentary on Romans, p. 124). This justification, on the ground of Christ's atoning blood, is appropriated on man's part by faith (Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:8). The blood of Christ is the remedy; the gospel is the means of presentation; and the hearing and obedience of faith, the method of application (Rom. 1:16, I Cor. 1:21, Gal. 3:2, Jas. 2:14-26).

"Each sin has a door of entrance,
Keep - that - door - closed!
Bar it tight;

Just outside the wild beast crouches
In the night.
Pin the bolt with a prayer!
God will fix it there."

B. God does not expect us to conquer sin alone.

1. Therefore He has provided a remedy for sin! "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). We can do all things through Christ who "strengtheneth" us (Phil. 4:13).

Sin necessitated the Cross; and sin necessitates the preaching of the Cross. "For necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16).

"There is darkness still, gross darkness, Lord,
On this fair earth of Thine;
There are prisoners still in the prison house,
Where never a light doth shine.
There are doors still bolted against Thee,
There are faces set like a wall;
And over them all the Shadow of Death
Hangs like a pall.

Do you hear the voices calling
Out there in the black of night?
Do you hear the sobs of the women,
Who are barred from the blessed light?
And the children - the little children -
Do you hear their pitiful cry?
O brothers, we must seek them,
Or there in the dark they die!"

CONCLUSION:

Sin exists - to deny it is to deny the reality and efficacy of the Cross. Sin exists to be overcome - to deny this is to belittle God's entire plan of redemption. Moreover, God expects us to overcome sin.