

So Great Salvation

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Chapter Four

SO GREAT IN VIEW OF SIN

The wonders of salvation and its greatness are best seen in view of the awfulness of sin.

Sin originated in heaven. Lucifer, the son of the morning, the covering cherub, who was set upon the holy mountain of GOD, was apparently one of the greatest of GOD's creatures and nearest to Him. Though a creature of GOD he refused to be subject to Him. He rebelled against GOD and said, "**I will be like the most High**" (Isaiah 14:12-14) and Ezekiel 28:14.

Man created in the image of GOD (Genesis 1:26), was perfect, but Lucifer, in the form of a serpent came to GOD's new creature and caused him also to sin.

The Essential Nature of Sin

To understand the awfulness of sin it is important to see what its essential nature is -- what it is that underlies all the outward manifestations of sin.

It has already been mentioned that GOD created man. To create means to bring forth out of nothing. While GOD formed man of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), all that is in man that is more than a lump of earth was brought forth out of nothing. Besides that, in the beginning GOD created that earth out of nothing. Therefore, all that man is and has is of GOD. He is

indebted to GOD for all.

He Who out of nothing could bring forth man, can also out of nothing, if need be, bring forth all that man needs. GOD can therefore provide all that man might need. By creating man GOD assumed the responsibility for keeping His creature. By preparing a garden for him (Genesis 2:8) He showed His purpose to care for man's every need. It follows then that the only rightful attitude for man, the creature, toward GOD, his CREATOR, is one of complete dependence upon GOD and therein is the beginning of the long and terrible tale of man's sin.

The story of man's first sin, by which sin entered the human race (Romans 5:12), is told in the first seven verses of the third chapter of Genesis. The serpent, i.e. Satan (Revelation 12:9 and 20:2), said to the woman: "**Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?**" In this question is a veiled suggestion to doubt GOD's goodness in His provision for man. GOD had commanded man not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). Satan implied that in doing so GOD was withholding some good thing from man.

The purpose of the question was to break down man's perfect confidence in and dependence upon his CREATOR. And that is just what it did. Instead of trusting GOD, the woman began to reason about His command. She added five words to it; "**Neither shall ye touch it.**" These added words made GOD's command seem unreasonable. She no longer implicitly believed GOD's Word. She was on the ground of reason in instead of faith. She looked to herself for guidance. That is always so when man reasons about the validity of GOD's Word.

Only one more prompting by the serpent was needed. He contradicted GOD's statement that the day they ate of the fruit they should surely die and then added that by eating they should become "**as God, knowing good and evil.**" The desire to be as God and not need to depend upon Him could not be resisted. The woman took of the fruit and ate and gave to her husband and he ate. By that simple act the creature had rebelled against GOD and had departed from his state of dependence upon Him. In that one act he had expressed a desire to maintain an existence independent of his CREATOR. **To feel that one can do without GOD, or even the absence of a feeling of the need of GOD, and to live without taking GOD into consideration, is sin.** This holds whether the person be one of refinement and of the highest moral standards, or one of a debased character. The good conduct of an individual is not the determining factor. It is the attitude toward GOD that counts. Sin, then, is essentially a setting aside of GOD by His creatures and taking unto themselves His place.

To depend upon self and to refuse to depend upon GOD alone is to refuse to honor and glorify Him as GOD. As a result thereof, man has gloried in himself and in his own works. This spirit of self-glory is exemplified by Nebuchadnezzar. As he walked in his palace one day he said, "**Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?**" (Dan. 4:30). It has been the spirit of man, ever since the first sin was committed, to glory in his own achievements and fail to acknowledge that all he is and has and is able to do is of GOD.

To refuse to remain in full dependence upon GOD is also to reject His will as governing in one's life, and to replace it with one's own will. This is nothing else than to depend upon one's own wisdom instead of the infinite wisdom of GOD.

The very essence of sin, then, is independence of GOD and dependence upon self. This manifests itself in failure to glorify GOD and in glorification of self. Man lives according to his own will instead of being guided by the will of GOD.

The Outward Expression of Sin

While the first sin was an act of disobedience and of theft, for man took that which was not his, these were but the outward expressions of the new attitude of independence of GOD. So also all acts which are called sins are but the expression and evidence of an inward nature that is independent of GOD.

The apostle Paul makes it clear that all kinds of sins are due to a failure on the part of man to maintain his rightful attitude toward GOD. Against the sinful human race he makes the following charge; "**Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in**

them that do them" (Romans 1:21-22, 28-32). This is the awful category of sins that are but the outward manifestations of man's failure to remain in his rightful attitude of complete dependence upon GOD, to glorify his CREATOR as GOD, and to remain subject to His will.

There is a definition of sin which completely confirms the above explanation of the nature of sin. It is, "**Whatsoever is not of faith is sin**" (Romans 14:23). Faith means dependence upon GOD (see **XV. By Grace Through Faith, or, How is Man Saved?**). Therefore, all that is not in dependence upon GOD is sin. According to this even things that seem to be good might be sin. Many think only of immoralities as sin. That is not true. The strongest bulwark of sin is not the den of vice. It is the place of self-righteousness. In the den of vice there may be a greater sense of need of GOD and dependence upon Him. The self-righteous feel no such need of GOD. They are sufficient in themselves, they depend upon themselves and are therefore far away from GOD though they may be highly cultured, refined and moral.

JESUS said to the chief priests and elders of the Jews; "**The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you**" (Matthew 21:31).

Man Is a Sinner By Nature

There is another aspect of the sin question that is often not clearly understood. That is, man is a sinner by nature. After Adam had sinned he was not at all the same being that he was when created. by sinning he became a sinner. Adam was the only man to become a sinner by sinning. All others are born sinners. When Adam was a hundred and thirty years old he begat a son "**in his own likeness**" (Genesis 5:3). As Adam was then a sinner this son who was begotten in Adam's likeness was also a sinner. Everyone, except JESUS, that has since been born has been born a sinner. King David wrote, "**Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me**" (Psalm 51:5). That is true of every member of the human race from Adam down to the present day.

Because of this sinful nature man cannot help sinning. That is why ". . . **all have sinned and come short of the glory of God**" (Romans 3:23).

Sin Is Against GOD

After the above discussion of sin it should not be necessary to call attention to the fact that sin is primarily against GOD. King David after having grievously sinned against one of his subjects confessed his sin to GOD and said, "**Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight**" (Psalm 51:4). Today there is much emphasis upon man's social

relationships, and man's attitude toward GOD is greatly neglected. It is therefore of great importance to remember that sin, which in its essence is independence of GOD, is against GOD. Let man first recognize this and return to the right attitude toward GOD and then his social relationships will become right as effect follows cause.

The Marvels of Salvation

When sin is seen to be rebellion of the creature against the CREATOR, the desire to be independent of GOD and to become like GOD Himself independent of any other, to take to oneself glory that is due GOD, and to disregard the will of GOD, then the awfulness thereof becomes apparent. It is to this problem of sin that salvation addresses itself. **"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . ."** (I Timothy 1:15). Only the infinite love of GOD could conceive the thought of providing salvation, and that at the infinite cost of the life of His Own SON, for such a rebel creature as is man.

But the marvel of salvation becomes even greater when it is remembered that it does not only provide a restoration of that which was lost through sin. At least those saved during the present age, as has been said, are to become conformed to the very image of the Son of GOD (Romans 8:29). They are to be holy and without blame before GOD (Ephesians 1:4) throughout all eternity. They are to be one with GOD the FATHER and GOD the Son even as they are one (John 17:21). They shall be "like God." They shall become that which was offered to man by the serpent, and which, in rebellion, man tried to accomplish by himself. And their place before GOD shall be that occupied by Lucifer before sin entered into his heart. But they are of an infinitely higher order than was he.

Salvation that forgives man's rebellion and does for him that which he tried to do for himself is well worthy of the name "SO GREAT SALVATION."

~ end of chapter 4 ~
