

# SALVATION: MAN'S GREATEST NEED

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“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one” (1 John 5:19).

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What John said about the whole world lying in the evil one is still a true picture of our world today. The picture certainly is a frightening one. People have made glaring departures from the moral and spiritual truths our forefathers knew. Ugly, sinister forces in our society have exerted tremendous pressures against all that God's people have held dear down through the centuries. The sad result has been a fearful degeneration of moral and spiritual values, and a casting out of some of the very principles that made our nation great, and which caused the kingdom of God to grow in the earth.

Notice some of the statements of God's Word that show us why such a pall of spiritual darkness has settled on mankind:

Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34).

The wicked shall be turned back into Sheol, even all the nations that forget God (Psalm 9:17).

... (for there is no man that sinneth not) ... (1 Kings 8:46).

Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions (Ecclesiastes 7:29).

Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither 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 59:1, 2).

For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away (Isaiah 64:6).

For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

The existence of evil in the world is not something new. It has been here since man sinned in the Garden of Eden. There is no new sin in existence, and no old sin has ceased to be practiced. But careful observation of the conditions in our society show such a fearful degeneration that we are fast approaching the immoral cesspool that existed among the heathen in the first century as described by Paul in Romans 1:21–32.

## I. THE SINFUL PREDICAMENT OF TODAY

*Look at what has happened in the realm of politics.* The name “Watergate” has become a symbol of crookedness and fraud in high places. Within more recent years, a vice president has been forced to resign, a president had to resign or face impeachment, members of the highest places in our government have been accused of misappropriation of government funds for their own uses, congressmen have resigned because of alcoholism, and others have been indicted for gross immorality. Leon Jaworski, special Watergate prosecutor, said, “Men who once knew fame sank into infamy because they forgot the difference between right and wrong. They permitted little evils to become big evils, little sins to become big sins. In hours and hours of listening to the White House tapes I did not hear a single reference to the glory of God, to the seeking of spiritual guidance and prayer. Even more pitiable was the taking of God's name in vain time after time . . . . A nation which forgets its spiritual foundations cannot expect the blessings of the Almighty.” While Jimmy Carter was president, he said in a news conference, “You sinners need to get married. You who are separated need to go

back to your spouses. Go home and learn the names of your children.”

*Look at conditions within the American family.* In a NBC newscast David Brinkley said, “The old fashioned American family—where the husband and father is the breadwinner and the wife and mother is at home taking care of the home and the children is about gone. Now only 7 percent of the American people cling to the old fashioned concept of home and marriage.” Another reporter stated that in one year there were more abortions than births in our nation’s capital. In the District of Columbia illegitimate births accounted for 51.1 percent of all babies born, and this was in addition to the abortions. Let us face the sad reality: Our beloved nation is fast becoming a nation of broken homes, a frightening percentage of divorces and remarriages (and unscriptural ones at that), of broken hearts and homeless children. What would the Old Testament prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah say about the U.S. if they were living today?

*Look at what is happening in education.* An ABC newscast said, “The biggest problem in schools is not so much violence as survival. The cost of vandalism in the nation’s schools last year was \$600 million. This is enough to hire 50,000 more school teachers. And the biggest place for violence is in the home. Two million children were wounded in homes last year by knives and guns as a result of violence.” Even worse is a document called “Humanist Manifesto, II” published in 1973 and signed by many leading educators. Let me quote a statement in this document, a statement with frightening implications:

As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, specially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith . . . . We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of survival and fulfillment of the human race . . . . We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species.

Belief in atheistic evolution has caused men to endorse such erroneous conclusions. And recently gross immorality has been discovered going on in kindergarten and nursery schools where children, both boys and girls, have been sexually molested and abused!

*But what about conditions in big business?* Crookedness, and various types of fraudulent practices are also being practiced in some of our largest industrial and business corporations. Officials in some of the huge business enterprises in America have been indicted and charged with such things as fraud, theft, buying favors of government officials, etc. A close friend of mine is the manager of one of the largest department stores in Arkansas. He told me while we were fishing together one day that literally thousands of items were stolen from department stores by shoplifters and employees. Another close friend of mine is the manager of a branch for one of the largest insurance companies in the nation. He told me that in one year \$17 million worth of merchandise was stolen from businesses in Arkansas.

*The realm of entertainment is no better.* It is only necessary to watch some of the passion-stirring, violence-oriented movies today to see depicted the “how to’s” that induce so many young people to engage in crime and immorality. Television is becoming so dirty, filthy, and profane that decent people are forced to turn the programs off. Some of the most popular programs each week teach children a variety of “curse words,” violences, and immorality right in their own living rooms. The realm of entertainment is in no better shape than other segments of our society.

*But what about religion?* Thou, too, religion? I have noted articles in leading news media which have reported such things as “Church Has Stripper Instead of Scripture,” noting that an exotic dancer danced for a certain church, and “When she was through there was nothing left but her G string and the congregation’s imagination.” In Toronto, Canada, the police closed down a “sex play” that had been showing at a certain church for about three months and arrested some of the personnel. In a certain mid-western state a club meeting of a certain church had a demonstration of “belly dancing” by one of the members. Such things may be more commonplace than most of us suspect. Our religious society is being infiltrated by homosexuals, both men and women, and such are being married and even ordained to pulpits in some of the denominational churches.

It does not take superior intelligence for us to see that people in our society today are sinful, rebellious to God, and in dire need. The greatest

need of all is salvation from sin. In reality, people's needs today are the same as they were when Jesus came into the world.

## II. THE SPIRITUAL PROVISIONS JESUS BROUGHT

*Mankind was in the throes of spiritual darkness when Jesus came into the world.* Ignorance among the Gentiles was so dark that literally thousands of gods and goddesses were worshiped. When Paul launched out on his first missionary journey, he went into sections of the country where false gods and religions were many. Later when he went into Macedonia and Achaia, he found the same. In such places as Ephesus and other places in Asia Minor, it was the same. In Athens Paul stood in the Areopagus and said,

Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, "To an Unknown God." What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you (Acts 17:22, 23).

In Thessalonica many ignorant heathen heard the gospel and turned to the true God. Later Paul wrote to them, ". . . ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God . . ." (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Whereas the Gentiles were ignorant of the true God's nature, the Jews were ignorant of God's righteousness. They believed in the true God but thought of Him as a national God. They did not understand that His righteousness extended to the Gentiles, and that He "would have all men to be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Paul said, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2, 3). Hosea lamented about 750 B.C.,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shall be no priest to me: seeing thou has forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children (Hosea 4:6).

When Jesus came into the world, He fulfilled man's need for an understanding of the true and living God. God has revealed Himself to some extent in nature. When He desired to reveal

Himself more fully, He did so through the revelations of the prophets. But when He desired to reveal Himself and His truth completely and finally to the world, He did so through a person—Jesus Christ. Jesus said,

I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . . (John 14:6-9).

Paul told the Colossians, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). John records, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Jesus taught the Father's will while on earth, and when He ascended back into heaven, He dispatched the Holy Spirit to earth to guide the apostles into all the truth. Thus, Jesus has brought release from the bondage of ignorance by the revelation of the Father Himself. Although spiritual ignorance is hovering like a dark cloud over most of the world today, yet God's revelation is available to all. People need to hear it preached by the saints till the knowledge of God and His will "covers the earth as the waters cover the sea."

*Because mankind was enslaved to sin and Satan, man stood in need of a Savior when Jesus came into the world.* Man could not save himself, so God provided His only begotten Son as the Savior. Gentiles were alienated from God, having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12). The Jews were in bondage to sin because they had transgressed the law which God had revealed to them. Jesus came to save.

. . . the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acception, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief (1 Timothy 1: 15).

Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).

Because the whole world "lieth in the evil

one," the most urgent need is a Savior. Jesus paid the price for the salvation of all, and is "The author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

When Jesus came into the world, *both Jews and Gentiles needed a high priest* through whom they could come to the throne of grace in time of need. Jesus is God's provision of a high priest. The writer of Hebrews said,

Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted (2:17, 18).

Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy; and may find grace to help us in time of need (4:14-16).

Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (7:25).

*When Jesus came into the world, man needed to understand that "the way of man is not in himself."* Jeremiah said, "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23). Jesus is God's provision of a way in which man can walk and please God. God's purpose and grace "was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9, 10). Jesus is the "light of the world," and "the way, and the truth, and the life." He that follows Jesus shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.

### CONCLUSION

One of the most difficult truths in the world is to get people to see how badly they need salvation. Once they understand what it means to be lost and how desperately they need to be saved, and understand the gracious and merciful provisions God has made for their salvation, they will be motivated to come to Christ in obedience to His will.

Jesus is the *only provision* God has made for your salvation. Will you not come to Him today?

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