



2 Cor. 3:18

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Why The Sinner Had to Die

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As we consider the title of this article, our response may be to think, “well, the sinner has to die because *the law* proves him guilty and requires his death.” We see his death as completely dependent upon his relationship to the law. This concept is rooted deeply into the thinking of Christians and while in a way, it is correct, this common understanding does not fully explain the truth. Let us consider for a moment what a law really is. A law is basically a principle or a rule which governs behaviour. A law dictates the way we operate.

But when we speak of law, there are two kinds of law which we need to consider. There is natural law and there is judicial law and understanding the difference between the two is critical to a proper appreciation of the reason why the sinner has to die.

NATURAL LAWS

In the case of natural laws, all men recognize the importance of always

working in harmony with them. The rules are built into nature and we cannot change them or adjust them. These laws simply describe the way nature works and they are called laws because nature compels all things to behave in conformity to those particular principles. We must work in harmony with them. One such law is the law of gravity. This law compels us to behave in a certain way with the sure knowledge that if we change our behaviour, drastic consequences will follow. For example, I may not agree with the law of gravity and so may step from the roof of a 50 story building. I will speedily find out that by not acting in harmony with the law of gravity I have suffered severe consequences. I may not like natural laws, but if I disregard them, unhappy consequences are sure to follow. This is true of all natural laws.

JUDICIAL LAWS

Judicial laws on the other hand, are laws which are laid down by a governing authority. They are laws which are considered good or necessary for the harmonious existence of a particular society and they are not necessarily the same in every society. The nature of these laws often depends on the nature of the society and those who govern and make the laws. With these laws, disobedience does not always bring a consequence. In many cases these laws are broken and the offender seems to get away scot-free. The enforcement of these laws is not built into nature as in the case of natural law. With judicial law, the governing authority has to do two things. First they have to make the laws and secondly, they

have to enforce these laws. They do this by imposing penalties for transgressing the laws which they themselves must enforce.

Of course, many judicial laws, established by various governments are faulty and even unjust. But God is the author of **all** natural law. Natural law is always good. He designed the universe in a **perfect** way with these natural laws built in to ensure that life would exist and continue in a pattern of balance and harmony.

THE NATURE OF MORAL LAW

The moral law has been said to be a “transcript” of God’s character. As this moral law is outlined in the Ten Commandments it is stated in a somewhat limited way and does not express the fullness of God’s character and may better be described as an “expression” of God’s character, rather than an exact transcript. However, when the moral law is properly understood in all its deeper implications, it certainly expresses what God is like in His moral nature and may be appropriately described as a transcript of His character. This means that *The moral law is what God is*. God did not **make** the moral law, all He did was put into words what He was and gave it to us as the way of life.

The law is to be presented to its transgressors, not as something

Also in this issue:

- Why Jesus Had To Die 5
- The Four Deaths 8

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion of the truths committed to the Advent movement, as believed and taught by the early Adventist pioneers. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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apart from God, but rather as an exponent of his mind and character. As the sunlight cannot be separated from the sun, so God's law cannot be rightly presented to man apart from the divine Author. {E.G. White - RH, February 3, 1891}

To live in harmony with this law is to be in harmony with God. Since God is life, then harmony with Him means to be in harmony with life. However, when a person steps out of harmony with the moral law, he is out of harmony with God and out of harmony with life. Death as a consequence is the inevitable result! God does not have to sentence or kill such a person. He automatically brings death upon himself by choosing to separate from God, in whom alone there is life.

God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Eph. 4:18;

Prov. 8:36. {DA 764}

So we see clearly that the moral law is a natural law. It is a law of nature. To walk in harmony with it is to have life. To step aside from it is to embrace death. No one has to sentence you, no one has to kill you. Sin itself will do the job as a natural consequence of the way the law operates.

HOW DEATH CAME

In the garden of Eden God said to Adam, "... in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17). Most people have understood this to mean that God was threatening Adam, that He was saying, "if you eat of this fruit, I will be forced to kill you." Was this how it really was? Was God threatening Adam or was He making a prophecy? Was He stating what He would do, or was He simply making Adam aware of the natural sequence of events which would follow if he stepped out of harmony with God? The apostle Paul says,

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (Rom 5:12)

Notice, one man brought sin into the world. When sin came in, death came with it. It was not God who brought death or imposed it upon man, it was sin which brought death. When sin came in, death came riding on its back! In 1 Cor. 15:56 Paul says that, "the sting of death is sin." When something stings you, a poison begins to work in your body and eventually brings about an end result. Somebody who gets stung by a deadly insect such as a scorpion, for example, has in himself the seed of death. The poison works in him and eventually brings the end result of death. So Paul says, "the sting of death is sin." Sin stings you, it injects you with a poison which begins a deadly work, killing you by degrees until inevitably, inescapably, your life departs from you.

So, Paul says, Adam brought sin, which

brought death. This death came upon all men, **because** all sinned. All men die **only because** all men have the disease of sin in them (Rom. 5:12). See how Paul proves this. He says,

(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (Rom 5:13)

What time period is he referring to when he says, "until the law?" He is speaking of the period before the law was given on Mount Sinai, from the time of the creation of the world until the time of the giving of the law to Moses. Of course, the law has always existed as a natural rule of life because the law is an expression of God's nature and God was always there, but it was not understood by the people of the world in general before it was given on Mount Sinai. Paul goes on to say, "but sin is not imputed when there is no law." What is the point which he is making? His point is, sin was here. Men were sinners, but God did not impute sin to them, that is, God could not charge them with guilt. Why couldn't he? Because the law was not yet given. Without the law men did not have a clear idea of what was right and what was wrong and therefore, there was no clear way of charging men with wrong doing.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (Rom 5:14)

In spite of the fact that the law was not generally known to men before God proclaimed it (that is from the time of Adam to the time of Moses), yet death reigned over men. All men suffered death (excepting Enoch). Since sin was not imputed (charged) to them, then it could not have been God who was judging them and killing them because they were guilty. They had not sinned as Adam had sinned, in deliberate disobedience of a specific command. Without the law, there was no way of charging them with guilt, yet they were

dying. What was killing them? It was sin which was killing them. Even though they did not have a clear definition of right and wrong, yet they were in a state of sin, passed on from Adam to all men and it produced death in all. (Rom. 5:21; 7:24; James 1:15).

WHY JUDICIAL LAW ENTERED

Yet there is no denying the fact that the Bible teaches that men will be judged on the basis of the law and those found guilty will be sentenced to die.

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. (Eccl 12:14)

So speak ye, and so do, as they



that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12)

These, as well as many other verses make it clear that our individual actions are significant, that God will consider every deed in the judgment. How can this be explained? If sin kills those who embrace it and death is the inescapable **consequence** of sin, why did God need to impose a **penalty** upon those who commit sin? Why was there the need of a judgment to rehearse and examine the deeds which men have done that each might be rewarded “according to his works?” Why did God not just leave the sinner alone in his dying state, knowing that sin would eventually kill him? Why did God place

the issues in a judicial framework, why did He establish judicial law with penalties, instead of simply leaving it where nature had put it, leaving sin itself to eventually destroy those who embraced it?

In Romans 5:20 we are told,

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (Rom 5:20)

The law entered for the purpose of making the offence increase, that it might multiply. That is, that men could become aware of just how great was the power of the sin which existed in them.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (Rom 7:13)

In other words, when Adam sinned, sin came upon all men. As a result men became involved in vile and evil deeds and all men eventually died as a result of sin. But for the most part men had no true concept of how sinful they really were. Men came to regard death as the normal way of life, they made no link between the kind of life which they possessed and lived and the death which came upon them all. God, in love, had to find a way to make men appreciate what really existed in their natures and to make them see that there was a connection between that nature and death – that sin was the cause of death, so that they might learn to fear and hate sin. He had to set a system in place “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” He expressed the law in a judicial formula so that man could understand the true nature of sin.

THE “DISCOVERY” OF THE LAW

The story goes that Isaac Newton was sitting under an apple tree one day when an apple fell on his head. To the inquiring mind of this scientific genius,

this simple event became the catalyst of an amazing “discovery.” Why,” he wondered, “did the apple fall on my head? Why did the apple fall down instead of up.” In considering this he became aware of the fact that this was the way things always behaved, every time, in every circumstance. This led him to formulate what is called the law of gravity and so he is credited with discovering this law.

Of course this law was in existence long before Isaac Newton arrived on the scene, but when he discovered it, for him and for the world, it seemed an amazing thing. For him it came as a complete surprise. Isaac Newton expressed this law in words and referred to it as the law of gravity. But although he expressed it in words, this was only a way of describing what was always there long before he or anybody else recognized it. When he expressed this law in words, it did not create or establish the law, it only made it known and understandable to some degree.

In the same way, the moral law of God always existed. All the angels obeyed it naturally with never a second thought.

Lucifer was the first one who discovered and pointed out to the angels that their behaviour was always in one direction, always in keeping with what God wanted. This thought that there was a law by which they were governed came as a strange idea to the angels because their service had always been one of natural, joyful obedience. As it were, Lucifer “discovered” the moral law and determined that he was not going to submit to it.

In order to enable man to understand the way the moral law works so that man might be able to discover the power of sin and to see the connection between it and death, God had to formulate this law, or in other words to express it in a formula which man could understand. This is what He did at Mount Sinai.

Let us look at an illustration which may help us to understand this matter better:

AN ILLUSTRATION

Suppose there are a group of people marooned on the top of a mountain. All around there are precipices with no way off the mountain. On looking down into these precipices, all one can see is darkness, the bottom is too far away to be seen. In actual fact, at the bottom there are jagged rocks waiting to pulverize anyone who falls or is foolish enough to jump from this mountain.

One day, a strange man appears out of nowhere and begins to persuade the people that down below, beyond the darkness there is a land of infinite beauty and plenty – a veritable paradise. He explains that there is a system in place by which those who jump from above suddenly slow down as soon as they pass through the darkness and eventually land as gently as a feather in this paradise. This strange person even takes a leap or two from the top of this mountain and returns with his arms laden with exotic fruit. Gradually the people are persuaded. One after another people start jumping.

However, there is one man who knows exactly what is waiting below. Frantically he pleads with the people not to jump and warns them of the horrible fate awaiting them, but all in vain. The people continue to jump. Finally this man, who is aware of the danger, pulls a gun and stands off to one side. He says, “I am going to shoot anyone who jumps.” A couple of people decide to take the risk and jump. To all intents and purposes, these people are already dead, but regardless of this, this man immediately shoots them dead.

Now the scenario changes. At first it was the fall that was killing the people when they jumped, but now it is this man who is killing them. Instead of the law of action and consequence working, instead of the law of gravity killing the people, now it is this man. He has established a system where they must conform to the rule or face a penalty and this system has taken the place of the law of action and consequence.

Now it is a judicial law (“you shall not jump or I will shoot you”) instead of a natural law (if you jump, gravity will kill you). The law of nature, is a higher law and it always exists, but because of peoples’ ignorance and their actions of self-destructiveness, this man who understands, has set up this judicial system within the natural system in order to save those whom he can. In actual fact he is only killing those who are already certain to die and in shooting them rather than waiting for them to be crushed on the rocks he is actually acting in mercy because now, he will achieve several positive things.

1. He will make those who remain afraid of jumping. By this means he will give the people an opportunity of living a little longer with the hope that they will discover for themselves the true nature of what lies below and the character of the being who deceived them.
2. He will prevent the suffering of those who are smashed on the rocks but who do not die immediately.

Of course, all the people will become scared of the man with the gun. They may call him a tyrant and seek for a chance to jump when he is not looking. They will resent his presence and blame him for depriving them of happiness although in reality he is only working for their good.

Can you see the parallel? This is why God has put the issues in the framework of judicial law, along with the necessary penalties. In giving the law God was saying, “if you jump, I will shoot you.” Although sin was always killing men, they did not recognize it and did not fear it. They accepted their corrupt lifestyle and their subsequent death as just the way life was and saw no reason to be afraid of sin or to change their ways. This is why God established a judicial system. He set up a framework in which if you transgressed the stated laws He would require your death. Now men feared sin, because they associated it with death and in trying to put it away from them they came to recognize how totally it

was integrated into their nature. They came to recognize that they needed supernatural help if they were ever to be rid of it and thus, the law became their schoolmaster to lead them to Christ. (Gal. 3:24).

Unfortunately, with many people, God came to be regarded as the real problem since He had given these rules and required that they be obeyed on pain of death. Men would have preferred to be rid of God rather than to be rid of their sins and they chafed under His rules and blamed Him for the fact that those who disobeyed had to die. The fact is that whether or not God had sentenced the transgressor to death it would not have mattered. Sin would inevitably kill him anyway.

Consider the case of the antediluvians or the Sodomites. God sent a flood in one case and fire in the other to wipe out their generation. If God had not done this, what would have happened to these people? Well, in a few more years that generation would all have been dead anyway! Sin, working in them would have killed them as it does all men! And they would have been just as dead as the flood or the fire made them! So why did God kill them a few years early? What difference did it make? It was because God wanted to make a statement so that others would learn to be afraid of sin, and also so that there would be a check put on the depths to which sin had degraded mankind.

THREE LEVELS

In our attitude and relationship to God, men are at basically three levels.

1. At the first and lowest level, men believe, “if I disobey God, He will kill me.” So they are afraid of God and seek to please Him from fear of punishment. This is the basis of the pagan religions, but many times the Israelites also worshipped from this warped motivation and sadly, many “Christians” today are still at this primitive level of understanding. These people see the problem as

Continued on page 8

Why Jesus Had To Die



I once heard the host of a popular talk-show in Jamaica describe God as a “blood-thirsty” being. His reason for coming to this conclusion was that he could not understand why God should demand death for the smallest act of transgression, and why He should be so inflexible in His demand that the only way He will forgive us is if His own Son should die instead. The way he explained it, it was God’s demand for retribution which made it necessary for the sinner to die and if this was not to be, then the only thing which God would accept was that His own Son should be sacrificed instead.

This man, clearly was in great darkness, yet he highlighted an issue which had been a nagging one with me for many years and for which I had heard many explanations, but none which really satisfied the concept of a God of infinite mercy.

I have heard it said that the law demanded the death of the sinner, that justice required that if man was to be spared, then one had to die in man’s place, and not just anyone, but one who was a divine Being – one who was equal to the law – the lawgiver himself.

The brand of sin upon the soul can be effaced only through the blood of the atoning Sacrifice. No less an offering was required than the sacrifice of Him who was

equal with the Father ... {RH, February 3, 1891}

But my question was, what law, what judicial system will accept that one person shall be punished for the sins of another? Who does this satisfy?

Let me explain what I mean by using an illustration. If I instruct my son not to pick any of my mangoes and he disobeys, then in order to make my instructions meaningful, I need to impose a penalty. This is for two reasons, first that my authority may be maintained and secondly that he may learn, for his own good that obeying me is important. Disobedience could get him into serious trouble some time. But in punishing my son these are the issues I consider. It is never an issue of vengeance, it is not to satisfy some desire in me for retribution, it is not to make him suffer for daring to go against my will. Furthermore, I would **never** say to my son, “If you pick the mangoes I will kill you!!” My punishment would be redemptive and rehabilitative. It would be for the purpose of making him a better person, of saving his life, not destroying it. Furthermore, if my son is truly sorry for what he did and demonstrates that he deeply regrets his actions, would it still be necessary to punish him? Why would I need to say, “well son, I see that you are sorry and I want to forgive you, but I cannot do that unless somebody is punished. You disobeyed my instructions and before I can forgive, somebody has to be punished. I see that you are sorry so I will not punish you, I will punish your brother instead.” Does this make sense?

This is an area of the plan of redemption which admittedly has been a gray area for me and for many others. I accepted the fact that there was a good reason why Christ had to die, and I accepted that it could not have been God who demanded His blood, but I could not understand or explain the reasons why it all was necessary. But

thankfully, in studying righteousness by faith I have finally seen the reason why it was essential, and I have come to appreciate what a wonderful plan it really was!!

LEGAL FICTION?

Not too long ago I came upon a question in browsing the internet which intrigued me. The question was, “is the gospel legal fiction?” The basis of the question is this: When men believe in Christ (accept Him as Saviour) then they are justified. That is, they are declared just, God forgives all their sins and regards them as being as righteous as Christ Himself. However, popular Christianity teaches that such a person is not actually in himself, in his nature and actions as righteous as Christ. Thus the gospel is open to the charge of being, “legal fiction.” It is seen as a legal transaction by which God “legally” accepts what is not true. He accepts us as righteous when in actual fact we are not. The theoretical issues, the legal arguments become the focus, they become the important things rather than the reality of what our condition actually is!

I have to be honest and say that such a concept presents a picture of God which is not becoming of the pure king of the universe. It pictures Him as one of the glib, fast-talking lawyers who use legal loopholes to free the vilest criminals, setting them loose on society only to repeat their crimes again and again. Is this to be accepted as the best “plan of salvation,” that God could offer? Is the gospel about legal arguments, or is it about the real problem of freeing man from actual sin?

In the main article in this publication (see front page), we established the fact that it is sin which kills men. The converse is true, righteousness is life. When we understand this, the death of Christ takes on a completely different complexion.

HOW LIFE IS TRANSMITTED

First, we must make note of an important fundamental principle which is critical to our understanding of this issue. It is this; once God has created life, it can only be passed on by birth (or by division as in the case of Eve who came from Adam's own life by way of his rib). Every creature receives his fundamental nature when he is born and it determines what he is, whether dog, cat, lion, wolf, human etc. Within the framework of that nature, each develops a character, but the nature is what determines the kind of creature it is.

As human beings we are all born with a spiritual, as well as a physical nature. All who come of Adam's race, are born with a sin-weakened, feeble, degenerate, dying body (sinful flesh) and a carnal, sin-enslaved, unrighteous spirit (a carnal mind). This is what we receive at birth, and none of the devices of men – medical science, psychology, education, re-socialization, religion etc. can change this nature, physically or spiritually, although man may subdue or disguise some of its manifestations. Nature is only transmitted by birth!! Man is born with a nature which, spiritually is dead. The Bible describes him as, "dead trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1,5)." He is born with a body which is dying. If he is ever to escape the power of this double death (physical and spiritual) which is at work in him, then man **must** be born **again!** Because nature is **only** transmitted by birth! (It cannot be obtained by imitating another).

A NEW SOURCE OF LIFE

But let us remember that when birth takes place, there is always an original source of life. There is always a parent, one who passes life on to the other. If there was ever to be a new birth for man, if he was to receive a new life, a new nature, then there had to be an original source, there had to be a parent in whom this new life existed. Furthermore, all the vital attributes, the characteristic qualities of this new life,

this new nature had to be intrinsically woven into the original life. They had to be first a part of the life of the parent before they could be passed on to the offspring.

What was it that God wanted to do for man? He wanted to give him a life in which sin had been defeated and destroyed, a life in which the nature turned to God and His righteousness as naturally as the flower turns towards the sun. Only by receiving such a life could man be redeemed from the awful destiny imposed upon him by the life passed on from Adam.

This is what God proposed to do in Christ. Jesus was to be the second Adam, the second prototype of humanity, "the everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6)," of a new humanity who could pass on a life in which sin had been conquered and destroyed and righteousness was a natural reality. But in order to have such a life to pass on, what qualifications did Jesus need to have?

- a. He needed to have taken sin upon Himself, experienced its power and to have defeated and destroyed it. Only in this way could He have a victorious life to pass on to His offspring.
- b. He needed to be a divine being, One who was, in His very nature, equal to the law. One who was the very reality of the living law. Only if He was such a Being would He be able to transmit a nature in which harmony with the law was a natural and perfect reality. An angel could have given instructions as to how to obey the law, he could even have given us an example, but only the Law-giver, Himself the living law, could pass on a nature in which the deep principles of that law were built in.

This is exactly the kind of Saviour that Jesus is and these are His exact qualifications. It is awesome when we understand the wonder and the perfection of the plan of salvation. Jesus had to be human, completely human, or else He could not have taken our sin upon Himself. He could not have taken our disease so that He could destroy it. Yet

at the same time, salvation could not come from one who was only a son of Adam. By the law of heredity all that Adam could transmit to his offspring was sin and death. If Jesus were only a son of Adam that is all He could pass on. In order to give life, He had to be from out of this world. He had to be of another race so that He could be able to bring a new element into humanity. More than this, Jesus had to be fully divine!! Only by being a divine Being, one equal with God, could He impart a life of perfect righteousness, one which did not only conform to rules, but which was in itself, by nature, pure, righteous and holy.

MADE TO BE SIN

So the word of God tells us,

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 Cor 5:21)

Notice what the word of God says; this is much stronger than saying that Jesus died for our sins. It says, He was "MADE" to be sin. How was this possible for a Being who was sinless? How was He made sin? How could it be that as Peter says,

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree . . . (1 Pet 2:24)

Because we have not properly understood the true nature of sin we have always misunderstood this. Some have believed that He bore our sins and was made sin, simply by the fact that He came with a degenerate human body and had the weaknesses of the flesh common to all men. Others, because they limit sin to acts of transgression, have supposed that He bore our sins in that every single wrong act ever committed in the history of mankind was in some mysterious way gathered together and piled up upon Christ. However, when we have a proper understanding of what sin really is, suddenly we understand what happened when Jesus became sin for us. Suddenly it makes crystal clear sense. We see the

wonderful truth which is at the same time, awful, and yet, awesome.

The root of all sin is unbelief, resulting in separation from God. In every being who has ever experienced this separation, whether it be Lucifer and the fallen angels or Adam, Eve and their offspring, this separation has, in every case immediately resulted in the *manifestation* of sin, that is, in the performance of sinful deeds. It is important that we understand the steps in this downward process of sin so that we may fully grasp what happened when Jesus bore our sins.

1. First there is unbelief – an unwillingness to trust God.
2. This results in separation from God.
3. The immediate consequence is a totally selfish nature.
4. The natural and unavoidable result is the committing of sinful actions.

Each of these stages has been referred to as sin because they are all related, with each one being either the cause or the result of the other.

The generally held belief is that Jesus only took the last one of these stages of sin, (the sinful actions) when He bore our sins. But since He Himself never committed a single act of sin, then it must have been simply the *penalty* of those sins which He bore. Thus our idea is that when Jesus bore our sins, God took every single wrong act which has ever been committed in the history of the world and laid the penalty of those wrong actions upon Him. This again has made us view salvation as a legal issue, something which relates to paper-work, the balancing of the books. We see Jesus bearing the penalty so that in letting us off, God may legally balance the books. We do not see the sins which Christ bore as an actual reality which dynamically affects the very lives in which we exist in a real and practical way.

But it was our **sin** which God laid upon Christ. Not sin in its end-result of sinful **actions**, not sin in its third stage of selfish nature, but sin in its very ori-

gins, in its basic principle, where it begins. Of course, Jesus did not lose faith in God. He never chose his own way (the first step) so He did not separate Himself from God (the second step). But God **laid our sin upon Him** (Isa. 53:6). God imposed the second step, (separation from Himself), upon Christ. He had to do this in order that Christ could destroy the sin principle!

As God withdrew Himself from His Son, Jesus suffered the full *consequences* of sin.

The spotless Son of God took upon Himself the burden of sin. He who had been one with God, felt in His soul the awful separation that sin makes between God and man. This wrung from His lips the anguished cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46. It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God—it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God. {SC 13}

SIN CONDEMNED

The agony of that separation was more than Christ could endure and it broke His heart. But let us consider what Christ did. In every other being who had ever been separated from God the immediate result had been selfishness. The third step in sin had followed rapidly. The desire for self-preservation had immediately become the predominant principle of the heart. Even Adam, who found his whole joy in Eve, found himself immediately accusing her in order to save his own skin after he sinned and became separated from God!

Now God left Jesus alone and immediately a horror of great darkness came upon Him. Without the comforting assurance of God's spirit everything looked uncertain and foreboding. Even the prophecies which related to His resurrection looked vague and intangible. The thought pressed upon His darkened and confused mind that if He died, it would be forever. Let us re-

member that Jesus was not in the comfort of His bedroom studying His Bible with the holy spirit illuminating His mind. He was a tortured human being, suffering greatly, deprived of sleep for probably more than twenty-four hours, suffering from loss of blood, bordering on hallucination and now, worst of all, **abandoned by the spirit of God!** There was no ray of light to shine into His mind, no comforter to bring the prophecies back to His thoughts with fresh power. In addition Satan assaulted Him with wave upon wave of doubt.

The logical, the natural, seemingly, the inevitable result, was that Jesus would take the next step in the path of sin and turn to selfishness, that He would seek to preserve His own life. Any other being in the universe would have done this. The holiest angel in the same situation would have done this. But Jesus was fully divine. He was God's **begotten** Son, of the same pure, holy, selfless nature of God and even when His powers were taken away, when the holy spirit was taken away, when hope was taken away, He could not stop being Himself. He could not become selfish for He was God by nature, and God is **wholly** good! Hallelujah!

Instead of turning to self, instead of taking the next step in sin, instead of bowing to Satan's principle, Jesus died to sin. He resisted sin in Himself and resisted it unto death, thus destroying sin forever in human flesh.

.... God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3)

It was in His flesh, in His human flesh that Jesus condemned sin. He took it on Himself and condemned it. Now there is a humanity in which sin has been destroyed. Now there is a humanity in which the enmity between man and God has been removed. There is a human life over which sin has no more dominion, a life in which sin took its best shot, but was defeated and destroyed. Where is this life? Where is

this humanity? It is in the second Adam, the new creation, it is in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11).

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom 8:1)

Sin in us condemned us and produced death in us. Separation from God produced selfish natures and selfish actions. But Jesus took this condemnation upon Himself, He bore the curse in His own body (Gal. 3:13) and there, destroyed this condemnation. This is the life which Jesus now imparts to all who will believe. A life in which separation from God, selfishness, selfish deeds, have all been abolished. **And this is why Jesus had to die.**

In all human beings there is a natural law at work implanted and inherited from Adam. This dreadful law is called “the law of sin and death,” and the apostle Paul describes the way it works in Romans 7:14-24. No man can, by any human device or effort overcome the effects of this law. It is a principle built into the lives of all who come of Adam’s race. It is a natural law, a law of nature. Rules and regulations cannot cancel or override natu-

ral law, so the Ten Commandments, God’s law expressed in judicial form, is helpless to solve the problem. Judicial law is never the real answer. Because law (judicial law) is weak, through the flesh (Rom. 8:2). A greater law than judicial law is at work in the flesh and judicial law cannot overcome that. It would be like me commanding a man, “when you leap into the air you shall not fall again to the earth.” All my commands would be useless. They could not overthrow the natural law of gravity, no matter how much I pleaded or threatened, or how hard this man tried. If natural law is to be overcome, a higher natural law must be introduced to counteract the previous law.

Gravity is a natural law which demands that all things remain bound to the earth. However, the effects of the law of gravity may be overcome by the law of aerodynamics. This is another law which, when applied may enable a person to rise above the law of gravity. This is demonstrated every day when we fly in aeroplanes. We overcome gravity by applying a higher law. Though this man would find my command impossible to obey in himself, yet if he were to apply the law of aerodynamics he would be able to obey my command.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT

So the word of God says, “the law of the spirit of life (natural law - the law of Christ’s righteous nature) in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (natural law - the law of my sinful nature).” (Rom 8:2)

... what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3)

The law of sin and death ruled in my being and I was helpless to resist it. The ten commandments could not produce the strength necessary to overcome it. But there is another law, the law of the spirit of life and where does this law exist? It is in Christ Jesus!! It may be found and experienced in Christ. What God did was to introduce another natural law to cancel the effects of the first law. Those who experience this natural law fulfill the righteousness of the law, they mind the things of the spirit, they have life and peace, their bodies are dead to sin and alive to righteousness, they are the sons of God (Rom. 8:4-14).



Why The Sinner Had to Die

Continued from page 4

being, God.

2. At the secondary level, people believe it is not God who is the problem, it is their actions. God does not want to kill them, but He will have to if they don’t change their actions. Justice will require that He destroy them. These have a better concept of God but they still have not come to grips with the real problem and they see death as God’s necessary action because He is controlled by justice. They regard the real problem as the deeds which they do. The effort must be to change their **works** so that they can meet the requirements of the **law**. On this

level, the sinner sees the issue as a question of satisfying justice.

3. But at the third level, finally we understand. There is one problem and one problem only. It is that separation from God has resulted in a disease in me called sin and it is eating out my life, it is producing evil deeds in me and is killing me. This is the true destroyer and it is not a judicial law that demands the sinner’s death, it is a law of nature – a law of consequence. Now we recognize that the real problem is sin in me and what I need is not to change my actions merely, but to change my nature. I must seek life in the only One who is able to accomplish this for me.

On this level, the believer finally operates on the basis of righteousness by faith.

We need to understand this because when our understanding reaches only to the secondary level, then our relationship to sin and to God is always viewed and experienced from a legal framework. Sin is related to the details of the law, salvation is related to obedience to the rules, God’s favour, and life itself are all related to the rules. In actual fact, this is the foundation of legalism – salvation and life in terms of a relationship to rules.

Continued on page 12

THE FOUR DEATHS

Some time ago I wrote an article which caused some controversy. It was entitled, "Did Jesus Die the Second Death?" I still stand by the conclusion reached then, that He did not die the second death. But now that I understand the matter better, in the light of Righteousness by Faith, I can see that my explanations were limited and that there were several things which I did not understand. I hope that this article will make the issue much clearer.

The word "death" is used in the Bible to refer to several states and admittedly, this can cause, and has caused some amount of confusion when there has been a failure to properly distinguish between the various kinds of death referred to. We will examine the four kinds of death most often mentioned in the Bible and for the sake of convenience we will refer to them as:

- a. The first death
- b. Spiritual death
- c. Death to sin
- d. The second death

When we understand the issue of death as the Bible presents it, we discover that there is a relationship between all four kinds of death. We also come to a better understanding of what happened when Jesus died and why He had to die.

THE FIRST DEATH

The first death is the one which we call sleep. It is the death which came upon all mankind as a result of Adam's sin. Paul speaks of this death and says,

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Rom 5:12)

Mankind in general is not responsible for this death. It is entirely the fault of one man, our great foreparent, Adam. It was he who brought it into the world when he introduced sin, and as a re-

sult, it passed upon all men. Death, in this sense, refers to the time when the breath ceases and the body returns to the dust. All men die this death excepting those rare few who have been and will be translated. In the normal course of things, this death would have been the end of man. When a man had lived out his appointed years and died at the end of them, that would have been the end of his story. Sin would have brought death upon him and this death would have been an eternal death if Christ had not made provision for a resurrection. As Paul again tells us,

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Cor 15:21-22)

SPIRITUAL DEATH

The next death mentioned is "spiritual death." It is not referred to by this name in the Bible, but it refers to the state where a person is without the spirit of God and is totally controlled by sin. The Bible says such a person is "dead in trespasses and sins."

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (Eph 2:1)

How does a man get into this condition? Is it by his own choice or are all born in this state? Again, this condition is the result of Adam's sin. When Adam sinned in the garden, the spirit of God departed from him and his nature changed. He became selfish and unhappy. This condition has been passed on to all his descendants who are all born unregenerate. That is, they are all born without the spiritual life imparted by the holy spirit. This is why all men need to be born again. (John 3:3).

This condition of spiritual death refers to the state of a man's relationship with God. A person cannot be saved in this condition and so, such a person may

be physically alive, but since his spirit is not united with the spirit of God, he is spiritually dead.

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. (1 Tim 5:6)

DEATH TO SIN

The next death is where we die with Christ, or we enter into the death of Christ. This death was accomplished for all mankind on the cross and reverses the consequences of the spiritual death which was imposed on us by Adam. In this death we die to self or to the sin-nature.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Rom 6:6)

This death is accomplished by the holy spirit which is restored to us when we are born again, thus setting us free from the law of sin and death so that we are no longer dead in trespasses and sins. In other words, by the power of the holy spirit, by the life of Christ, this death becomes the reality of our experience so that we receive Christ's life in which sin has been crucified and righteousness is the reality. This death is for all men, but can only be experienced by those who will believe it, who will enter into Christ by faith. This death is in Christ. It is Christ's death and can only be experienced when we become a part of His life.

THE SECOND DEATH

The second death is the final experience of death, and is the experience which has caused some amount of controversy. What is this second death and why is it necessary? In the simplest understanding, the second death is the final destruction of the wicked as well as of all things which are destructive and harmful. It is mentioned in Revelation in four places (Rev 2:11; Rev 20:6; Rev 20:14; Rev 21:8).

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Rev 21:8)

It is clear that this second death represents a total end from which there is to be no return. Here, this final destruction is referred to as "the lake of fire."

As we look at the relationship between these four deaths we can see that all men die the first death. All men are also born into the state of spiritual death. However, those who choose, will experience the death of Christ, which is a death to sin. The condemnation which they experienced in Adam will be taken away when they experience the death and resurrection of Christ. (Rom. 6:8). Because of this, they will not experience the second death.

All men must die to sin forever. The righteous experience this eternal death to sin in Christ. The unrighteous experience this death to sin in themselves when they are destroyed finally and forever at the end. Those who will not choose to die in Christ, will have to die the second death because they will retain that condemnation in the flesh, the sinful body and mind of death.

CHRIST'S GIFT FOR ALL MEN

Romans 6:23 says,

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 6:23)

Most people understand this verse to be saying that when we die without repenting of our sins, then we will be sentenced to die the second death. Therefore, the **second** death is regarded as the wages of sin. But this is not the true meaning of the verse.

What is this death, the wages of sin, which comes upon all men? Firstly this is referring to spiritual death, or separation from God. This death is a natural consequence of sin. It is a part of

sin and wherever sin goes it follows automatically. All men, being sinners have this spiritual death working in them at birth.

But the fact is that this spiritual death means that man must also die physically - removed from the sustaining presence of God, man, spiritually dead, must lose his physical life also. The truth is, all men receive the wages of sin because all men have sinned. This is the same thing which Paul says in Romans 5:12. "*Death came upon all because all sinned.*" But God gives a gift and provides an answer to sin's wages. He has provided eternal life for all men in Christ.



In the normal course of things this death, (physical) would have been immediate and would have occurred at the same time as spiritual death. But Christ purchased a probationary life for man, that is, man's death was to be delayed for a while. He gave all men a probationary **physical** life, a period of time in which it would be possible for man to have an opportunity of finding his way back to faith and to spiritual life. Since this life is only probationary and only to enable man to make his choice, it is not permanent - it is limited in duration. It eventually ends for all men whether they live good or evil lives.

It changes our perspective on life when we realize that death is now our natural state. We are only alive because through Christ God has set up an unnatural situation to allow us to live for a time as sinners. In the natural course of things, sin cannot exist in the universe and utter destruction would have been our destiny from the inception of

sin, if Christ had not exercised His power in restraining the forces which would have surely destroyed the sinner.

WHICH DEATH DID JESUS DIE?

In addition to a life of probation, Christ obtained something else for all men. He obtained a resurrection from physical death. The death which Christ died to save us from, is the death which came upon us because of Adam's sin. This includes both spiritual and physical death. Christ conquered death by submitting to its power, by becoming its victim and then breaking its chains when He was resurrected, thus breaking its power. Now He says,

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. (Rev 1:18)

Now He has the power and the right to deliver us from death, to break the chains by which it holds all men, because He has conquered it. But let us note, it is not the second death that He frees men from. If Jesus had died to set men free from the second death then at least some would be brought back from the second death. But no, Jesus has nothing to do with the second death. It was death pure and simple that was mankind's problem, the death which was imposed upon us by Adam, and so, Jesus came, the second Adam to undo the damage done by the first Adam. First, to give us spiritual life, to resurrect us from spiritual death, and secondly to resurrect us from physical death.

... our Saviour Jesus Christ, ... hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: (2 Tim 1:10)

We have taken the first death lightly because we have not appreciated the fact that if it were not for Christ, there would have been no resurrection from this death. If Christ had not died for us, every man who was ever born would have gone to the grave and that would have been the end of his exist-

ence. Forget about the judgment, forget about the second death. Such things would not have been necessary if not for Christ's provision which provided a resurrection from the dead. Jesus undid the damage caused by Adam. Now, the first death is only a sleep but this is so only because of the provision which Christ has made. Notice what the Bible says so clearly:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Cor 15:22)

All die in Adam. That is, everyone who has come of Adam's life dies. Even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor 15:21)

The experience of death came by man. All who experience death have Adam to thank for it. Likewise all who experience resurrection have Christ to thank for it.

WHY RESURRECT THE WICKED

You may be thinking, "well, why bother to resurrect the wicked?" The fact is, **all men** are resurrected by Christ's provision. He is the second Adam. He came to undo the damage done by the first Adam and that includes death. Let us note that whatever Christ has done for mankind has been done for all men. God does not deal in predestination and so His provisions are made for every single human being. In other words, God makes the provision on the assumption that every person will be saved. This includes the provision of a resurrection.

The question is, since Christ has undone the damage caused by Adam, why is it that all men are not saved? Since Christ will resurrect all men, why are not all men to receive eternal life?

When Adam sinned, he made a choice as to whom he would believe, whom he would worship. His descendants, although born in a state of sin, also needed to be given that choice. Through Christ, God provided a life of probation for Adam's children during

which time He would fill their lives with blessings in an effort to make His love and His way known to them. Men would be able to see the need to believe in and to trust in God. In Christ, God would provide a way that it would be possible to recover from all the effects of Adam's sin. But since man's choice must always be respected, this way of recovery would only be accessible to those who would believe in God's gift in Christ. During this life of probation man would be faced with this great challenge, to believe God and receive His life in Christ, or to disbelieve Him as Lucifer and Adam did, and to remain in the lost life of Adam.

So we see that Adam and his offspring are faced with similar, but radically different choices. **Adam's natural state was life.** All he had to do was to retain what he already had by continuing to live in faith. To lose life he had to step into the way of unbelief. But **his offspring's natural state is death.** They only have to continue to live in unbelief and they will retain death which is already their natural state. Their challenge is to escape the clasp of death through faith in Christ.

Those who accept the remedy will escape the disease, those who reject it will retain the disease and so, will eventually suffer the second death because Christ's provision of resurrection for them will be of no avail while the disease of sin is still present in them.

A JUDGMENT NECESSARY

But between the first and the second death, a judgment intervenes. What is the purpose of this judgment? What is the question which it is intended to settle?

Since not all men choose Christ, there is the necessity of demonstrating that men either have chosen Christ or chosen to remain in Adam. At the end, the judgment demonstrates which choice men have made. Those who believe are not condemned but those who have not believed retain their condemnation.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth

not is condemned already ... (John 3:18)

But the question of whether or not men have believed in Christ is proven by an examination of men's works because true faith always produces works. If a person has believed in Christ the sure evidence will be the works which he has done. (Matt. 7:17-20; James 2:17).

Said the Judge, "All will be justified by their faith, and judged by their works." (Christian Service - 88)

However, though judgment is on the basis of works, the real issue is not, "what kind of works did I do?" but rather, "am I in Adam or in Christ."

So all men go down to death with the question still to be finally settled: During the time of probation on earth did they choose Christ or did they choose to remain in Adam?" For those who made a profession of Christianity during their lifetimes, the question is settled in a judgment, before Christ returns, for the righteous are not to be brought back from the dead at the coming of Christ to face an investigation, but only to experience the joy of eternal life.

Those who never possessed true faith in Christ will also be judged while dead, but later during the millennium. When they are brought back to life at the end of the thousand years by the power of Christ, the evidence has already been examined. All that remains is for them to see it for themselves.

They are raised to life with Adam's condemnation, the seed of sin still in them. They never chose to give up sin, or to accept the gift of life in Christ. They demonstrated that Adam's way was more pleasing to them. Death is still working in them in spite of their resurrection and inevitably, in spite of Christ's work for all men, **they must return to death, for they never escaped its condemnation.** If Christ should resurrect them a thousand times they would return to death every time because the life in them is a dying life.

In the context of the judgment, in the framework of the law, they are con-

demned for their sinful actions. However, the law and the record of sin have only demonstrated that they never chose Christ, that they never let go of Adam's life with its condemnation. This is the real reason why they must die.

As God finally removes the restraints by which He had preserved this planet and its inhabitants in their sinful state, those with sin still in them cannot survive. As germs cannot live in sunlight, so the wicked and everything which is sinful, cannot survive God's unveiled presence and they are destroyed by the "fire" which comes from God.

By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. (DA 764)



Why The Sinner Had to Die

Continued from page 8

NOT MY WORKS, MY NATURE

When we come to the third level, when we are no longer children or servants, but sons (Gal. 4:3,7), then we understand. The real problem is not what I **do**. It is not a problem of my works, it is what I **am**. It is a problem of my nature. I realize that God's effort is not to change my works, but to give me a new heart, a new nature by means of which my works will change. Now I am not afraid of God, I am not even afraid of my actions, I am afraid of myself! Now I no longer struggle to change my **works**, but I seek with all my heart to find and to submit to Christ by faith, who alone is capable of changing my **nature**! It is not God, or even justice which requires my death. It is

my sin cursed nature which is working death in me, and while the law of God has brought me to that realization, it is powerless to solve the problem. I must come to Christ (not the written law but the living law) that I may have life (Gal. 3:24), that I may have a new nature.

God set the controversy in a judicial framework. He established laws and penalties, but this is not the whole picture, this is the picture within the picture, the secondary level. The true issues exist on a higher level, not on the judicial level, but on the level of natural law where we are involved with the principles which are built into the very existence of the universe.



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