

WHOLE AND HOLY – IT'S HIS PLAN

God's Rescue Plan

“The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal’ (Rom. 16:5, R.V.). It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne.... God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, ‘that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”^[1]

In a moment of awe and praise over that love, Paul said, “Thanks be to God which giveth us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” to the Corinthian church (I Corinthians 15:57). Man is damaged physically, mentally and morally from sin. On the wonderful promises of restorative changes in each of these areas rests every individual’s hope.

Condemned

How severely was man maimed from sin? So badly that God sentenced him to death (Romans 6:23). God couldn’t accept any excuse nor was He able to shrug it off and say, “That’s okay, see if you can do better tomorrow.” Man must suffer the consequences of rebelling against the Life-giver.

Two things heighten that frightful thought: (1) how “small” the original condemning sin of Adam and Eve was and (2) how that sin left their posterity so weakened morally, they all sinned (Romans 3:23).

“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.” Romans 5:12. Physical death is described here, but in verses 17 and 21 eternal death is implied. One man’s sin – death to all!

Seems so strange, doesn’t it. Couldn’t Adam and Eve have children who were perfect? Why did their mistake impact me so deeply? Was there some genetic weakness in our first parents that was activated when they ate that life changing fruit? If we might catch a glimpse into how terrible sin is, even to the slightest degree, then maybe we can understand the sentence better. But even more, what God did to rescue man will begin to capture our wonder and admiration. If we can see that every generation chose to sin, just like Adam and Eve did, we won’t blame God or them.

Moral Standards for Immoral Man

We must discover how awful we really are to see how wonderful Jesus really is. We must be led to see how amazing redemption is. What actually did happen to mankind? How did sin change man’s nature?

First, let's answer what "sin" is. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." I John 3:4. That helps. Transgression is the breaking of the law. Sin is behavior contrary to the law and rebellion against God. If I break the law, I sin. If I rebel, even in my heart, I transgress the law.

Whatever that law represents, it must be perfect! In fact, it is perfect. Why? Because it's the standard I'm judged and condemned by. Paul said, "The law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). How could a law be perfect, just, good and even holy? It must be related to Jesus. Only He is perfect, holy, just and good. The law must define part of Jesus' character. Paul saw the amazing place the law had in the Christian walk: "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20b).

If I rebel against that law, I defy Jesus. If I break that law, I have committed a moral crime. My sin announces to Him how I disrespect His law and authority. That is exactly what Satan did when he rebelled in heaven. That spirit even deepened into contempt – which he never lost.

If we are part of God's universe, we are automatically under His law. As with any just institution, you break the rules and you will be punished. Violate a perfect law, receive a perfect punishment – death. Any compromise would raise questions as to how perfect the law and God ultimately are. Thus, He has no choice in how He punishes. Satan craves compromise. It justifies his claim that the law can't be kept. But punishing man for sin is a moral imperative for a perfect God.

The sinner forfeits the life that His Creator gave. There are three legal ways that God might address this dreadful situation:

1. Let man die:

Here there would be no hope, no second chance nor any mercy. Satan would charge God with stern traits devoid of love. He would be just in announcing to all created beings that God's laws couldn't be kept. God's reactions would be seen as cruel and heartless.

2. Change His law:

This would show that God is fickle. He said: "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). If the law is holy and good, it can't be changed. Could God change the law? No. It represented Him in all glory and moral purity.

3. Create a substitute to suffer in man's place:

From a moral standpoint, that substitute would have to be as holy and pure as the law itself.

That's where Jesus comes in! A substitute could preserve God's just nature and elevate the perception of all created beings as to what His love was really like.

An Unchangeable God Can Change My Nature

To appreciate Jesus and that atonement we explore even deeper what our natures are like.

Dirty: “We are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” Isaiah 64:6.

When something is unclean or filthy, we might assume it could be washed. That’s exactly what we can experience through Jesus: “Wash and make yourselves clean. [How?] Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong.” Isaiah 1:16. God does not tolerate sin. In His amazing love He says: “Take a bath.” “Wash away those sins.”

We can rinse the sins off, but only scrubbing with soap and internal cleansing can purify. That’s what Jesus said He would do.

His blood is that detergent. It cleanses outwardly and inwardly. He said: “I will cleanse you from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

Diseased: The Bible portrays our natures in another way. Jesus said that a person does not need a physician unless they are sick. He was referring to sinners (Luke 5:30 -32) as having a disease – sin. God had already said that He could heal that malady long before.

“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with *healing* in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall (Malachi 4:2).

“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3).

So, God hates sin and sees it as a moral issue, a disease, and as something dirty. But He has promised a “way of escape” (I Corinthians 10:13). How? “Return, ye backsliding children, [and] I will heal ...” (Jeremiah 3:22). We are to return to God. When we come to Jesus He says, I will help you die to sin and my stripes will heal you (I Peter 2:24). Isn’t that wonderful? Jesus said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:32). I can come to Jesus just as I am.

“All who have a sense of their deep soul poverty, who feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus.... He bids you exchange your poverty for the riches of His grace. We are not worthy of God’s love, but Christ, our surety, is worthy, and is abundantly able to save all who shall come unto Him. Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness.”^[2]

“I love to speak of Jesus and his matchless love. I have not one doubt of the love of God. I know that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto him. His precious love is a reality to me, and the doubts expressed by those who know not the Lord Jesus Christ, have no effect upon me. ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever

believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Do you believe that Jesus is your Saviour, and that he has manifested his love for you in giving his precious life for your salvation? Take Jesus as your personal Saviour. Come to him just as you are; give yourself to him; grasp his promise by living faith, and he will be to you all that you desire. To every one inquiring, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ I answer, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ Do not for one moment doubt that he will save you just as you are, if you will only come to him. He said to the Jews, ‘Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.’ Let not this be said of you. Jesus longs to save you, to give you peace and rest and assurance while you live, and to bestow upon you eternal life in his kingdom; but no one will be compelled to be saved. Jesus says, ‘Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.’”[3]

Prisoner of Sin: God finally described sin as captivating even our choice. “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” John 8:34. Paul senses that in his own life: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” Romans 7:18-25.

God simply covered all the bases and left no wiggle room for Satan – if we come to Jesus. He delivers us from that evil snare. Paul felt the tenacious grip that it can have on the heart so much that he described it as “law of sin” inside of him. “I know that in me dwelleth no good” (vs 18).

Jesus promised in the covenant agreement that His law, His very character would be put inside of us (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Hebrews 8:10 , 10:16). What happens when that occurs? “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus *hath made me free* from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:2.

There is a battle raging. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.” Ephesians 6:12). But Paul in a victory statement declared “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39). That victory can be yours because of a divine committee meeting that met long ago.

“Before the Father He pleaded in the sinner’s behalf, while the host of heaven awaited the result with an intensity of interest that words cannot express. Long continued was that mysterious communing—‘the counsel of peace’ (Zechariah 6:13) for the fallen sons of men. The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’ (Revelation 13:8); yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race. But ‘God so loved the world,

that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 3:16. Oh, the mystery of redemption! the love of God for a world that did not love Him! Who can know the depths of that love which 'passeth knowledge'? Through endless ages immortal minds, seeking to comprehend the mystery of that incomprehensible love, will wonder and adore."^[4]

If my nature is immoral, dirty, diseased and imprisoned, Jesus can make it pure, clean, whole and free. Since He experienced my death penalty, I now must discover how my nature can be changed. Next month we begin that study.

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References:

^[1] *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 23.

^[2] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

^[3] *The Review and Herald*, June 23, 1896.

^[4] *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 63-64.