

Christ Came to Save

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"He shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Salvation in all its depths and heights of meaning is a wonderful word. Salvation means "making safe." But safety implies the existence of something from which to be saved—some calamity, danger, or evil.

There are many evils in the world—evils physical, moral, domestic, social, and political—but the great source and center of all human evil is sin: sin in its malignant principle; sin in its envenomed essence; sin in its tyrannical power; sin in its soul-damning guilt; sin in its blighting consequences.

Who may portray the darkness of sin, the discord of sin, the bondage of sin, the impurity of sin, the power of sin, the horrors of sin?

Sin is the mortal disease of the human soul. All the human race confessed the disease. All systems of philosophy and morals, ancient and modern, recognize the dire evil.

Now, Christ comes to cure this disease—and comes for no other purpose. It then becomes a question of supreme importance whether the remedy is adequate to the emergency. What is the extent of this salvation? How far does Christ propose to save men in this world?

He does not propose to save us from trials and tribulations, but to give grace to brave and bear all serenely. He concedes and confesses that "in the world ye shall have tribulation," but promises, "in me ye shall have peace."

He does not propose to save us from temptation, but to save us in temptation, and with the temptation make a "way of escape."

He does not propose to save us from errors of intellect, or mistakes of judgment, or wanderings of mind—but to save us from errors of the heart, and wanderings of the will.

He does not propose to give us grace by which we cannot sin, but grace by which we need not sin. If the words of John's Epistle be thought to suggest an impeccable state, "He cannot commit sin because he is born of God," it must be remembered that the word "cannot" is a moral cannot. The word is used here as by Luther when before the hostile assembly of Catholic priests, bishops, and princes, he dared to do right, and said, "I cannot do otherwise." The word is used in the same sense when we say of some magnanimous man, "He cannot do a mean thing." By this use of "cannot" we mean that the person is averse to doing a certain thing, it is against the current of his nature, he is not inclined or disposed to do it. This sense of "cannot" is common and unmistakable. In this sense, then, the holy man "cannot" commit sin; he is averse to it; his whole soul abhors and dreads sin. But still he may sin, by permitting himself to contemplate sin unguardedly, or by approaching sin too near, so as to be blinded or fascinated by it. A person says very consistently, "I cannot look directly over the brink of Table-rock at Niagara." And yet he may, in an unguarded moment approach so near the brink as to fall over! Thus while Christ does not give us grace by which we absolutely cannot sin, He gives us grace by which we need not sin, and such "a heart in every thought renewed" that we shall have the greatest horror of sin, and consequently the greatest safeguard against sin.

Christ does not promise to save us from our ignorance of many things in nature and the Bible, but to so illuminate our minds that we

need not and shall not "abide in darkness" respecting our personal salvation.

Christ does not promise such maturity that there can be no further growth, but such purity of soul as is the necessary condition of normal growth toward maturity.

Maturity of soul is distant as the end of immortality, purity is a possible and promised state of the believer here on earth.

The miraculous atonement washes "whiter than snow." The blood of the atonement "cleanseth from all unrighteousness." These terms are absolute.

If the question be still pressed—What is the extent of the promised salvation?—we answer affirmatively:

This salvation meets and matches the guilt of sin by pardon or justification, free, full, absolute, and eternal.

This salvation meets and masters the moral death of sin in the soul, by regeneration, radical, miraculous, divine.

This salvation meets and destroys the envenomed essence of sin in the heart by sanctification entire and spotless.

This salvation meets and nullifies the penal

If There Had Been No Christmas

If there had been no Christmas morn,
No Christ Child in a manger born,
No shepherds watching in the night,
No angel song, no star of light,
Then there would be no hope today
For this old world where sin holds sway.

No peace for souls weighed down with sin,
No deep abiding joy within,
No burdens lifted by His grace,
No strength to run life's weary race,
No sorrows eased, no tempests quelled,
No fears dispersed, no doubts dispelled.

No song of praise, no answered prayer,
No loving Lord to guide and care;
But friend, there was a Christmas morn
When Christ, the Son of God, was born.
Oh, hallelujah, praise His name,
Hope lives today because He came!

—Harriet Heine.

consequences of sin by closing the gates of punishment, and opening the gates of the paradise of God to the saved soul.

The salvation then is adequate—is co-extensive with the disease—is perfect.

All the attributes of God unite in a supreme argument for full, free, and final salvation. This will appear when we remember that God commands all men, "be ye holy," and in so commanding He assumes the obligation and responsibility of rendering it practicable for all men to "be holy."

And now, when it is announced, "Thou shalt call his Name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins," who will dare mar the music of this Divine Name, and say, "He shall save His people partially or imperfectly from their sins?"

No, we will not impeach the great Redeemer and declare Him incompetent for His self-assumed office. We dare not in secret prayer at the solemn mercy-seat whisper, "Save me, Lord, partly from my sins." The holiness and omnipotence of the enthroned Mediator would rebuke our profane prayer. Nor can any soul, however wildly it may reason or rebel, tell the exalted Saviour to His face that He cannot fulfill His promise and pledge to "save his people from their sins."—Earnest Christianity.

"Unto Them That Look For Him"

Many shivering shepherds huddled by fires on lonely Judean hillsides watching their flocks that memorable night so long ago, when the Son of God began His earthly pilgrimage as a tender, helpless Babe. But it was to only one group of them that the angel of the Lord appeared, saying, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Did you ever wonder why? The answer, I feel certain, rests alone on this: they were looking for Him?

The angel knew the perhaps unspoken longings of their hearts; and so sure was he of their careful interest and that they would surely seek Him, that he provided them with this unmistakable identification: "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." They were looking for Him! No discussion about what this should mean, no questioning as to what was their highest duty at this time; they lost no moment in idle conjecture. In simple wonder, yet with child-like trust, the next step was clear: "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found . . ." Oh, it is ever humble, trusting hearts that, looking for Him, find Him!

Have you been looking for Him? So many expect to find Him in the Inns of life, in the times of fellowship, in that which is showy and splendid, where the crowd stands by to cheer or commend. So few look for Him where He is oftenest found, in the lowly, obscure, unwanted providences of life.

Have you looked for Him in that burden? In that galling circumstance for which there seems to be no likely solution, in that valley of weeping, so dark and foreboding, that seems to have no ending, He is there. And those who seek Him there will surely find Him. Find Him, and wonder at the glory of the thing they counted almost unbearable.

His presence made that lowly stable a place of revelation and worship, a holy place where pilgrims year by year return remembering. Oh, look for Him in that heart-break, that crushing sorrow, that bitter disappointment, that daily drudgery. Sternly put aside all questionings, all doubtings of God's goodness and His love; bid all self-pity speedily be gone, pleading the covering of the precious blood. Then, come, come with haste in search of Him, as did the shepherds on that night. They found Him; and you too will, when you truly look for Him. And from that day, the sting all gone, the hurting thing will be a holy place, a place of revelation, with each remembrance prompting praise and worship.

The many, like those other shivering shepherds huddled at their fires, see no glittering angel, hear no joyous tidings, seek no manger, and find no Christ, no solution to life's problems and burdens. Nevertheless, however checkered the pattern, true today and through every tomorrow, "unto them that look for him shall he appear"; and in His presence, all is right.—In Wesleyan Missionary.

"Too often the Christmas tree overshadows the cross, and God's Gift to men is well nigh forgotten in men's greed for gifts."