

*The Collect*

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve; Pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. *Amen.*

*The Epistle 2 Cor. 3:4-9*

SUCH trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

*The Gospel* St. Mark 7:31-37

JESUS, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

## *Towards A New Soteriology – Part 2*

Let me recap the main point of what we said last week: We saw in our Gospel lesson then that the religious establishment of Jesus' time had completely misinterpreted the essence of the "new promise." Jesus said that the religious establishment didn't even know the Scriptures. And that they didn't know the power of God. And we said that because of the devil, this problem of gross incomprehension about the person and work of Christ will continue to recur again and again until he returns for us in the end.

I also said that a good example of this is a view common in our church today. A view which demonstrates that we need a fresh articulation of soteriology – the science of salvation. If we are going to have renewal, reformation and renaissance in our church, there are several key areas in which we are going to have return to the essentials of our religion and in prayer and in fasting, rethink our position. This is one of them.

The modern view of salvation is called penal substitution. This theory maintains that Adam simply fell – like humpty dumpty - and that the person and work of Jesus Christ is to simply put him back together again. Nothing less; nothing more. And this view has permeated the entire church. This is not a liberal and conservative issue. It is not a Reformed and Evangelical issue either. And it is not even a Catholic and Protestant issue. It is everywhere.

I see that the basic plan of salvation and redemption of 1 Corinthians 15 has been completely ignored and that this theory of "penal substitution" has been substituted in its place. The theory of penal substitution maintains that God is angry about Adam's fall off the wall or paradise and wants someone to pay for it - before he will even speak to Adam's race again. And so the purpose of Jesus shame and death is to placate an angry God and simply restore the relationship of Adam's race to him.

I believe that we are in a situation just like in the days of Copernicus; many people knew that the majority position prevalent in the Church was wrong and Copernicus was right, but none had the courage to say it. I'm saying it now. We're wrong. And believe me: people's jobs are on the line. That's why they are afraid to question the prevailing orthodoxy about how salvation works.

For many years the Church did not know that the world was older than 6000 years. Now we do. It's a lot older. C.S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton – the greatest Biblical apologists – and many early Evangelicals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century believed that God used something like biological evolution to create man. They said that it was no threat to Christianity or Christian soteriology. And I believe them.

They believed that at a certain point in this biological evolution, moral sentience developed. Moral awareness and moral accountability developed. We can see this process recapitulate in our own lives and our own children. This is where the creation account in Genesis (albeit sketchy) begins.

But from the point of view of the author of Genesis, the story we see isn't that important in unlocking the exact *origin* and mechanism of sin. The story is merely a bridge between the mists of the ancient past and the situation of Abraham. These people did not need a rigorous explanation for the ubiquity,

universality, and the origin and depth of human depravity. The fact of human sin was everywhere understood.

Thus once this story is told, Adam is never mentioned again in the OT, except once, and that incidentally by Job: *If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom...* (31:33) Eve, the pivotal player in Penal Substitutionary soteriology, is never mentioned again in the OT. And for that matter, Adam and Eve are not rigorously mentioned in the NT in this connection either.

From the absence of any significant mention of this modern myth-like retelling of the fall of Adam and Eve, we must begin to collect the Scriptural data concerning the grand purposes of God in history that we do have in order to understand it. We must also study the screenplay called "history," and from this play and from this data, make our way to some coherent statement about soteriology – about salvation itself that does justice to God's purpose, and to his love and to the person and work of Jesus Christ. If we make theological *deductions* from a miserably conceived gnostic myth, we will get a miserably conceived, gnostic soteriology.

In one of the few references to Adam in the New Testament we find that even though Adam was not deceived (1 Tim 2:14), what he did was sin (Ro 5:14) and as a consequence; since we are the sons and daughters of his, we all die even though we have not sinned like him. (*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* Ro 5:14).

Yet the NT and the biological sciences imply that the animal (fleshly) nature of Adam was *intrinsically* subject to death, just like any other animal or plant. This is part of the created order. And the NT specifically teaches this: *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God* (Ro 8:20-21).

Adam could not know that spiritual obedience to God would result in being clothed upon by a *spiritual* body that could not die. He had to *learn* this. And his first step in this process was clearly a misstep. But his preliminary disobedience did not result in physical death immediately (although it does seem to have had a gradual creep – reducing the lifespan of man from ~ 1000 years to 70).

And it did not result in spiritual death either, since Adam did not yet possess it to lose. (*And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever* Ge 3:22)

What Adam's mistake did was (for the time being) to *alienate* him from God and from the direct process of merely *acquiring* immortality through his own, ordinary human efforts. Thus without some intervention, Adam's soul, which had been given the very image of God, was also subject to the spiritual devolutionary process of losing it forever.

But what Adam now begins to learn, which continues progressively throughout the generations of Adam, is what was *always* true: Adam's destiny - and his children's destiny - their immortal lives and their eternal inheritances are built upon three things 1) the belief in the absolute goodness and

righteousness of God 2) trust in God's mercy and love and 3) the universal, redemptive, cleansing blood of Christ.

It is somewhat of a misnomer to say that we gain "immortality." It is better to say that we gain "eternal life" – which is what the Bible does say. Because the *unfaithful* and disobedient angels and men also live forever (in a manner of speaking). But it is a living death. They are immortal in fires that - like the burning bush – burn, but do not consume.

So in addition to dying like any other animal, without intervention, all men will die spiritually in Adam, because Adam now represents, typologically, the humanistic man of the earth (the earth-dwellers, John calls them in Revelation) – Cain who offers his own self-righteousness to God instead of Abel who offers the life blood of another animal; Abraham who fathers Ishmael by Hagar to "help" God fulfill his promises; instead of a wiser Abraham who trusts and understands and believes that God can and will keep his promises, and he is willing to sacrifice Isaac. David who, pursuing his own lusts takes another man's wife; instead of Naomi who pursues what is noble and right instead of her own selfish devices and desires of her own heart.

Moses, indeed, begins a new era - esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt - an era of redemption that is consummated by Christ himself. Abraham and David had become personally justified by faith and their sins were "covered" and "not imputed." But the work of Moses speaks of a corporate, messianic redemption, which eventually envelops the whole world in a thorough *transformation* of individual souls.

All live in Christ because through his person and work, Christ gives man the fruit from the tree of everlasting life, from which Adam had been temporarily barred. (*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive* (1Co 15:22) Adam proved himself unworthy on his own to take from that tree. But in Christ, we become inseminated from above through the overshadowment of the Holy Spirit and the new man that is conceived in our soul *apprehends* not the fruit – but the fruit-of-life-giver, which is Christ.

What Adam could not acquire through his own strength or goodness, we acquire through the strength of Christ, who through his highpriestly offering of himself for our weakness, purchased the power and the right to take from that tree and to give to us and thereby make us strong and worthy to sit at the table of the gods. Eve gave to Adam the fruit of death. Christ gives to Adam and his children the fruit of life.

Thus the "Lamb was slain *before* the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8) because *love* of creation behooves it, not emergent, existential falling off the wall of paradise. Adam's sin was not his derivative nature.

Adam's sin was his refusal to acknowledge his weakness and his dependent derivation. His sin was thus like Abraham's. He would plot his own course; not follow God's. Jesus learned obedience (Heb 5:8) to the course of God in Adam's place and for his sake. He demonstrated to Adam the eternal plan

and course, irrespective of sin: *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam an everliving spirit (1Co 15:45).*

So John, early in his Gospel says: the ultimate condemnation in the new era of the NT must be understood like this: Jesus Christ stands before every soul and empowers him to apprehend his redemptive purpose and also Christ's ownership of the fruit of life, which he freely offers to every soul - no preconditions. And every soul either eats of that fruit or refuses to eat - eating its own fruit. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3: 19-21)*

This is our destiny. It has been the destiny of man from before the foundation of the world. That is why Christ offers his life for this destiny for the eternal glorification of man. Our destiny is to fulfil what it means to be created in the image of God. We begin our lives as two cells coming together in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The entire process of our conception and our maturation recapitulates the whole purpose and progress of creation.

Salvation is not a matter of accepting a "get out of hell free" card. Salvation is the process whereby God takes a handful of dust and creates a glorious creature in his image and through his sacrificial and redemptive love, transforms that merely physical creature of dust and ashes into a lovely, glorious spiritual being, worthy and able to sit at the table of the gods for all eternity. This is really not a new soteriology. This is an old soteriology. It was God's will from the very beginning. And it is our destiny. - *Amen.*