

The Gospel Invitation

All about us today, we see chaos, mayhem, misery, war, and death. Although pain is rampant, God did not create man for all this suffering; it is not natural to man as he was first created^A. This chaotic world is brought about by what the Bible refers to as sin. It is important to understand that sin is not something that we do because we are worse than anyone else; rather, it is the consequence of a depraved nature that all men and women without exception have inherited from birth^B. In plain words, sin is any thought that we may have or any action that we may take that is in opposition to God's will.

When the first man, Adam, sinned, he plunged the entire human race into a sinful state of existence that begins at their birth and prevails throughout their lifetime. Adam's original sin was to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil^C. In doing so, he henceforth regarded his own self-centered thoughts and decisions to be superior to the loving authority of God his Creator to guide him in paths of true righteousness. Adam's body began to age such that it must eventually die^D. In rejecting God's will in favor of his own willfulness, Adam had also rejected God Himself such that he could no longer have any direct correspondence with Him. God had no alternative but to banish Adam from his presence^E for this grave act of disobedience lest it stain His own perfect holiness. God is perfect and pure in thought and action and He rightfully expects his creation to emulate that perfection in their own lives^F.

Nevertheless, the Bible tells us in no uncertain terms that everyone on earth has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God^G. If we would be perfectly honest with ourselves, we must admit that we sin on a continuous basis every day because it is in our nature to do so. All of our thoughts are ultimately self-centered – ignoring God's will in all the decisions that we make throughout life. Any effort we may make to turn away from sin in order to make ourselves acceptable to God is hopeless because everything we say or do is fully tainted with our sin that prevails in our fleshly minds^H. Thus, we find that all of us remain alienated from God because of our fallen sin nature over which we have no control. There is none that seeks after God^I for a remedy, but instead openly defies Him and his authority over them.

Moreover, the Bible tells us that God must severely punish sin; He has declared that the soul that sins must die^J, for the wages of sin is death^K. If the sinner could stand directly before Him in his fleshly nature, he would be immediately consumed – because our God is like a refiner's fire that destroys all that is unholy^L. The ultimate consequence of our alienation from God is physical death followed by the eternal separation of our soul from our Creator in a place of eternal torment that the Bible refers to as Hell. The Bible describes Hell as a place of outer darkness^M as well as a place of perpetual fire that is never quenched^N. The condemned will not suffer the torment of Hell in some passive way such that they cannot feel physical pain, but they must suffer excruciating pain in their souls and in their old resurrected sinful flesh in which they have earned this punishment. Truly, all of this is very bad news indeed.

But, hear now the Gospel – the Good News: “God so loved the world that He gave his only son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but receive everlasting life.”^O God's very Son was born into the world as a baby in Bethlehem of Judea to a human mother named Mary. Mary was a virgin having never known a man intimately^P. This child, which was named Jesus^Q, had been conceived supernaturally by the Spirit of God and was therefore both fully human and fully God even before his birth^R. This is what is referred to as the Incarnation wherein God came down to earth to dwell in human flesh. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world (it was already condemned through sin), but that through his sacrificial death a large remnant of mankind could be saved from the eternal death that all deserved^S. This act of love is what we commonly refer to as the grace of God – a truly amazing act issuing forth from God's divine love for mankind that was fully manifested in Jesus' death on a Roman cross on mankind's behalf. By God's grace alone we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ^T.

When Jesus died on the cross He took upon Himself all of the sins of all mankind from Adam on; God laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all^U. God's wrath was fully vented upon his own Son such that his holiness and divine justice was fully satisfied in the death of Jesus' flesh. Jesus was then buried in a borrowed tomb in which his body lay for three days. But, it was impossible that the grave could hold the Son of God as it would have a mere mortal man^V. On the third day, an angel rolled away the massive stone that sealed the tomb revealing to Jesus' followers that the tomb was empty^W. Only the grave clothes

that had covered Jesus' body remained – folded and set aside. Following his resurrection from the dead Jesus appeared alive in the flesh communing with his immediate disciples for forty days^X and appearing to more than 500 others^Y before He ascended from the earth in his flesh to return to his rightful place at the right hand of his Father in Heaven^Z. All of this is historic fact that is meticulously recorded in the Bible by reliable eyewitnesses of these events such that we have no rational grounds to reject it.

The atonement provided through Jesus' death is not universally applied to all of mankind, but is applied only to a relatively few in number that have come to fully trust Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation^{AA}. The greater multitudes reject Him choosing instead to remain in their sins. The path to eternal destruction is indeed wide, while the path that leads to eternal life is narrow such that few ever find it^{BB}. Nevertheless, out of the greater mass of humanity, God is calling out a people for his Namesake^{CC} through the Gospel in order to redeem a large remnant of the human race. Through that divine call He is not forcing anyone to follow Christ; rather, He implants an enlightened desire to know Him within specifically chosen individuals through the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. This divine action is what is often referred to as the “new birth” or “spiritual rebirth^{DD}.” Although this enlightenment unilaterally comes forth from God, it is necessary for each one of us to positively respond to the call of the Gospel in order to accept the redemption offered us in Jesus Christ; none who come to Him will ever be cast out^{EE}. This is the most important decision that you will ever make in your lifetime inasmuch as your eternal destiny depends upon it. For that reason, we implore all men and women to consider whether they are the reprobate that must deny Christ until death over takes them and they are thrown into Hell, or whether they truly have within them a desire to repent of their sins through trusting Christ that they may enjoy the eternal glory and benefits of Heaven in which we shall glorify God and enjoy his presence forever.

No one should ever make an important decision without first counting the cost of doing so, and so it is with this greatest decision any of us shall ever make. If we choose to reject God and his Christ, we may continue living in our sins for the brief period of time that has been allotted to us on this earth, but we must receive the just sentence of eternal punishment in the hereafter. Conversely, if we choose to accept Christ as our savior, we must also accept Him as our Lord to obey his commands in this life^{FF}. It is impossible to accept Christ as Lord and continue living in habitual sin^{GG} – we must be willing not only to repent of our sins, but to abhor what they have already done in our life. Only then can we know perfect and everlasting peace with God. In obeying Christ's commands we discover that the burden He places on us is light^{HH} compared to the terrible burden of unforgiven sin that had weighed so heavily on our conscience. This is because it is now the love of Christ that constrains us in all that we think or do^{II}.

In accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior, we immediately become entirely new creatures, and as our entire life changes^{JJ}; we soon discover that we are going directly against the grain of this world. We remain in this world, but we are no longer of the world – now having our citizenship in Heaven. We can expect the world at large to despise us because it also despises Christ^{KK}. We have become as salt in the wounds of the living dead. Therefore, the Christian's life becomes a life-long struggle against the fallen world that continually beckons us to return, as well as the strong dictates of his own flesh to satisfy its temporal desires. Satan will make every effort to draw us back under his power through our unsaved friends and even through unsaved family members. In this life we shall experience many illnesses and troubles that are common to all mankind and even suffer persecution in varying degrees^{LL} as we take up our cross to follow Christ^{MM}, but this suffering will be as nothing when compared to the glory and joy that we shall receive throughout eternity in the presence of our loving God^{NN}.

Therefore, having heard the Gospel, you must now choose whom you will serve; you must either serve Christ, or continue to serve Satan by tenaciously holding on to your sin and serving the demands of this fallen world. There is no middle ground, and there is no other means by which you can be saved from God's wrath to come.^{OO} Either you must suffer for your sins eternally in Hell, or trust Christ who has already suffered the punishment for sin that you deserved in his own death such that you can go forever free. It is my sincere hope and prayer that this very day you will choose life over death by embracing Jesus Christ as both your Savior and Lord.

Arthur J. Smith

A

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen 1:31).

B “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

C “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

D “And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died” (Genesis 5:5).

E “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24).

F “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

G “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23);

H “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:19).

I “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11).

J “Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4).

K “For the wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23).

L “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire...” (Malachi 3:2).

M “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:30).

N “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44).

O “For 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).

P “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

Q “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

R “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

S “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17).

T “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

U “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isiah 53:6).

V “He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:31).

W “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1Corinthians 15:3,4).

X “To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Y “After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep” (1Corinthians 15:6).

Z “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9).

AA “He who believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he who believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

BB “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14).

CC "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14).

DD "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

EE "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

FF "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

GG "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)?

HH "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

II "For the love of Christ constraineth us..."(2Corinthians 5:14).

JJ "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Corinthians 5:17).

KK "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

LL "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1Peter 4:12.13).

MM "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

NN "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

OO "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).