

SIN AND SALVATION

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The study of “Sin and Salvation” should evoke the primary interest of every sincere saint. Sin is mankind’s greatest problem; therefore, salvation should be mankind’s greatest pursuit. For all that God has done to intervene in the affairs of man to lift him from sin to salvation through Christ and his church there still remains the concern that certain sins may be so grievous to the holy God that he may choose not to forgive them. Contrary to popular belief, God does not simply clear people who are guilty of committing sins. The Lord proclaimed of himself, “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Exod. 34:6-7). Will God simply clear the guilty? The Bible answers that he “will by no means clear the guilty.” The prophet Habakkuk observed, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” (Hab. 1:13). The divine view of sin is stated succinctly in Psalm 7:11, “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”

Separation, Shame, And Suffering

Sin creates separation, shame, and suffering. Isaiah wrote, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). Paul wrote, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” (Eph. 5:11-12). Jude intensified the thought in reference to false teachers saying they are like, “Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13). Jude also spoke of the suffering associated with sin, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (v. 7).

“The God of Our Salvation”

“The God of our salvation” has made salvation from sin possible through Jesus Christ and his church (cf. Psa. 68:19). The Messianic prophet spoke of it in Isaiah 53 when he wrote of Jesus,

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 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 . . . for the transgression of my people was he stricken. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (vv. 4-6, 8, 10-12).

Confidence In Jesus

Therefore, confidence in Jesus to bring obedient believers home to God at last must be maintained. An affirmation of such confidence appears in Hebrews 7:25, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Isaiah longed to see the time come when the church would be established and members of Christ’s kingdom would be seeking to fulfill the Master’s mission of preaching the gospel to the whole world. He wrote,

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength (Isa. 26:1-4).