

WHY THE PLAN OF SALVATION WAS NECESSARY

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Introduction

The Bible is a book about sin and a Savior. Paul announced wonderful news in this regard:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death (Rom. 8:1–2).

This grand statement at once calls attention to mankind's need of a means by which he might be saved from "the law of sin and death" and to the fact that such a plan is available and operable. The need for salvation implies dire jeopardy of some sort and a cause for this danger. The cause of this irreparable loss is transgression of the law of God—sin: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). The jeopardy is loss of one's soul in eternal separation from God in Hell—death in the ultimate sense.

How It All Began

But exactly when did man become subject to this awful "law of sin and death," and how did this sad state of affairs occur? To ask when sin entered the world is to ask when a human being first violated a law of God. This question takes us back almost to the creation of mankind—to Genesis 3 to be exact.

God has never left men without law in any age. Those who teach that the grace of this Gospel age excludes accountability to all Divine law err egregiously, yea fatally. Such teaching is heresy in the first place, and in the second place, it is ultra-absurd. If grace excludes law, then it also thereby excludes grace itself, or at least the need for it. As already noted, sin is the transgression of God's law, "...but where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Rom. 4:15). Thus if men are not under law, they cannot sin; there is henceforth no need for grace. Grace implies sin, and sin implies law. The *grace-only* advocates therefore engage in foolish self-contradiction.

God gave Adam laws to be obeyed when He created him, the first two of which are recorded in Genesis 2:

And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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. (vv. 15–17).

God first issued a positive directive. Adam was to take care of the paradise of Eden in which He placed him. If he failed in this regard we are not told. God also issued an explicit prohibition, with a penalty attached for its violation. Adam was not to eat of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” upon the penalty of death if he did. Here, at the very dawn of human existence, God iterated His “law of sin and death”: **If you sin you must die**. Paul echoed this law in the New Testament: “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23a). First Eve, and then Adam, transgressed this law of God. There are no sadder or more consequential words in all of the world’s billions of books than these, describing the behavior of the first woman and man: **“she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat** (Gen. 3:6, emph. DM).

Death involves separation. Jehovah had warned that they would die if they ate the forbidden fruit. This death sentence involved physical death, whose tyranny over humankind began in this incident: “Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). From that early day of the first sin till the Last Day when sin will forever cease, physical death will be the common lot of all, whether small or great: “It is appointed unto men once to die...” (Heb. 9:27a). Enoch and Elijah have been the only exceptions to this part of the sentence. The only future exceptions will be those who are living when the Lord returns (1 The. 4:17).

That men should die physically as a penalty for sin was only the lesser part of the death sentence. The far sorer element was its spiritual implication—separation of fellowship with God, both in time and for eternity. The moment they ate the forbidden fruit, our original parents sinned, and the moment they sinned they forfeited their blessed fellowship with their Creator—**they died spiritually**, even as they began to die physically. From that first sin in Eden until now, sin has ever been the wedge that separates men from God (Isa. 59:1–2, et al.).

The sins of Adam and Eve brought death to **them**, but as so often is the case, those sins wrought horrendous far-reaching consequences **beyond the moment** of their own transgressions. While through these two sin invaded the earth (and we all suffer physical death on this account [Rom. 5:12]), their billions of descendants **do not suffer guilt and its spiritual condemnation because of what they did**. One becomes a sinner only because and when **he** or **she** sins, not because or when **they** sinned (Eze. 18:20, et al.).

The grave, seemingly insoluble, problem now facing mankind was accentuated by this first sin. He was in a horrible spiritual “catch-22.” He must flawlessly keep God’s law in order to escape death: “Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book

of the law, to do them” (Gal. 3:10b). However, he found it impossible to do so: “For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). If no reprieve could be found from the demands of flawless keeping of the law, the entire human race was doomed to eternal separation from its Creator.

Justice Tempered with Mercy

God’s faultless justice demanded man’s condemnation because of his disobedience. The Creator had demonstrated His matchless power, wisdom, and knowledge in speaking the world and all living things into being. He demonstrated His justice and holiness in condemning man for his sin. The powerful and just God would now show Himself to be a merciful Deity in His Edenic curse upon the Satanic serpent: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

This prophetic curse may include a reference to the constant warfare that the devil and his angels wage against humankind in general. However, more particularly, *her seed* is immediately narrowed to a single “he” and “his” who would engage Satan himself in a do-or-die struggle.

God announced the outcome of the contest: The “seed of woman” would deal a deathblow to the head of Satan, while Satan would inflict a relatively insignificant wound to the heel of the woman’s Seed. This statement shone a ray of light and hope, faint as it was, upon an otherwise now dark and sin-cursed world. The beam of this light grows ever broader and brighter as one moves through the Old Testament record.

We see the “promised seed” theme in God’s promise to Abraham (Gen. 22:18) and later, to David (2 Sam. 7:12-14a; cf. Psa. 89:3-4, 29, 36). Numerous New Testament passages identify these “seed” promises with Jesus of Nazareth, declaring their fulfillment in Him (Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:29-36; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 1:5; et al.)

Little wonder, then, that the last part of the Jehovah’s curse upon the serpent has for centuries been credited as the first Messianic prophecy. This view has been so long and so widely held that it has been given the name, the *protevangelium*—“the first gospel.” Note the expression, *the seed of woman*. Consistently, in the discussion of procreation, seed is attributed to the man rather than to the woman. There has been one exceptional case in which a woman brought forth a son without seed from a man—the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, “... who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power...” (Rom. 1:3-4; cf. Mat. 1:20-21; Luke 1:30-31, 34-35).

Man's Need and God's Provision

At last, “when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman...that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4–5). With His coming:

- “There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world” (John 1:9).
- “The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” arrived (v. 29).
- “The darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth” (1 John 2:8).
- He “abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

He came on a mission “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10) from Eden’s to eternity’s doorstep (Gal. 4:4b; Heb. 9:15).

Satan had introduced death, disease, and destruction into the world and shattered man’s innocence and his fellowship with God. What was lost in Adam could now be regained in Christ:

So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous (Rom. 5:18–19).

Although it appeared that the Arch Adversary had prevailed over the Seed of woman at Calvary, the death of Christ, as horrible as it was, in comparison was but a “heel bruise.” There was no adequate redemptive agent for sin and sinners before He offered His sinless blood: “Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission...,” but it was “... impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 9:22; 10:4). So, in the irony of all ironies, it was the Lord’s death—in which His sinless sacrificial blood was shed—that gave Him the power over Satan and sin:

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14–15).

When Christ burst the bars of death, He struck the final, deadly blow to Satan’s head, from which he can never recover. The Lord’s resurrection was the certification of His triumph, as it “declared [Him] to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:4). Dim though it may seem in isolation, God’s statement to Satan in Genesis 3:15 is distinct enough for us see in it the glorious promise of victory over sin and death—and of reconciliation to God.

Conclusion

That which man so desperately needed—a plan of salvation—God, through His Son, has supplied. Mere mortals can only marvel at their Creator, Who would have been completely just in destroying our original parents, but Who tempered His wrath at their sin with mercy. A subject of even greater wonder is that God and His Son would be willing to make such a momentous sacrifice that They might extend grace and redeem hopeless and helpless mankind: “But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Only by this means could He remain “just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). Genesis 3:15 announces the first hint of this astounding mystery which has now been fully revealed in the Gospel.

The salvation that Christ made possible through His cross is not unconditional. There are some things men **must do** in order to be forgiven of their sins and reconciled to God: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and **do not** the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). While grace and salvation are universally **available**, they are not universally **bestowed**: “**Not** every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father** who is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21, emph. DM). There is no more essential employment for any human being than learning and obeying the Lord’s plan of salvation as set forth in the events of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37–41, 47).

[Note: I wrote this MS, and it originally appeared as an “Editorial Perspective” in the November 2003 issue of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*, a 36-page monthly of which I was editor at the time.]

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