

MANS FALSE AND FATAL ATTEMPTS TO SAVE HIMSELF

Why So Many are Dying in Their Sin and Going to Hell?

It is upon your answer to this question that your present happiness and your eternal destiny depends.

In His, Word God has taught one truth which is beyond all contradiction. It is that sin has created an awful chasm between Himself and man. Man may ignore or condone sin, he may treat it very lightly, he may even be so foolish as to deny its reality, but that does not alter the unalterable fact that sin exists and that it separates from God. God does not treat sin lightly. God hates it, God condemns it. "Sin unatoned for must be an insuperable barrier between the sinner and God."

If the natural man is to be brought into favor and fellowship with God, it is evident that something must be done with sin. Man's first step in returning to God must be a consciousness that deepens into a conviction of sin. So the question which comes to every person who awakens to his condition through sin and its consequences, is the same as that which came to the Philippian jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

THE NATURE OF SALVATION

Let us analyze the jailor's question. First, "What must I do to be saved?" Who is the "I"? A lost man enslaved by sin, self, and Satan; a blind man, whose mind has been darkened by the god of this world and whose eyes are closed to the beauty and glory of God; a dead man alienated from the life of God.

Second, "What must I do to be saved?" He does not ask what he must do to be reformed or repaired or repolished but to be saved. The question he asks is, "How can I, an enslaved man, have deliverance; a blind man have sight; a dead man have life?"

Third, "What must I do to be saved?" What can a bond slave do to free himself? Or what can a blind man do to gain sight? Or what can a dead man do to make himself alive?

Let us answer the jailor's question by defining the kind of salvation which will fully meet the sinner's need. It must be a salvation God can accept as wholly sufficient and satisfactory. God is the One who has been offended and most wounded by sin. By his sin, Adam forfeited all right to a relationship with God and it is God alone who can say by what means and in what manner the relationship with sinful men can be restored. Man has no ground upon which he can approach God. If God ever receives the natural man it must be upon some ground where he confesses himself a helpless, hopeless, sinner.

“Between him and God is the impassable gulf of moral inability. Between him and God is the barrier of penal judgment.” God alone can determine how this chasm shall be bridged and this barrier removed.

It must be a salvation that deals effectually with sin and all its consequences. This salvation must put away sin and give man a new nature, without which there would be no basis for establishing a relationship with God. This salvation must blot out man’s sins and their attendant guilt. Sins committed cannot be undone merely by an expression of sorrow or by a promise of an amendment through a New Year resolution or by the turning over of a new leaf.

It must be a salvation that carries out the sentence of death upon the sinner. God’s law is holy and it cannot be trifled with. God’s judgments are righteous and they must be fulfilled. God has said, “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” The penalty must be paid; the judgment must be executed. Any salvation that saves must take into account the payment of this penalty and the execution of this judgment.

It must be a salvation that accomplishes the defeat, dethronement, and destruction of Satan. God’s judgment upon Satan who brought sin into the universe must be executed as truly as God’s judgment upon the sinner. God has said that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.

This is one half of the original promise of salvation. Christ’s final victory necessitates Satan’s full defeat. Such must be the nature of any salvation that fully saves.

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But there are those who, refusing to accept God’s estimate of the natural man, deny the necessity of any such radical and revolutionary change in him. They delight in the exaltation of the flesh and they deny the self-evident fact that human nature is in utter ruin though they are compelled to admit that it is greatly in need of repair. They believe and teach that human nature is imperfect because it is in the process of formation. But given a proper environment, liberal education and the chance to make the best of what he already possesses, a man by his own natural development ultimately will achieve Godlikeness and attain a place in the Kingdom of God. In other words, salvation is not by grace but by growth; it depends upon an evolution of life from within rather than upon an impartation of life from without.

There are those even in the pulpit and in the theological seminary who teaches that the natural man is not dead but diseased; not wicked but weak; not fallen but fainting, and they attempt resuscitation through ethical culture, social reform, and mass education while ridiculing the necessity of redemption through the atoning work of the crucified Saviour and regeneration through the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Their kind of preaching is well summed up in the word of a prominent preacher who said, "Do your part and God will surely do His. To deny that a man is forgiven when he turns away from wrong and asks forgiveness would be to deny the moral character of God." In such teaching, man is made his own savior, and salvation is nothing more than a feeble sense of regret resulting in slight changes in conduct to which God is asked to affix His seal of forgiveness.

This kind of thinking and teaching leads men to seek out ways of salvation which are futile and to rest upon hopes which are false. If the meaning of salvation is what we have indicated in these pages then the means of its accomplishment must be supernatural. But man is ever prone to put his trust in the purely natural, in himself.

When the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened to evil and they came into a realization of their sin and shame instead of seeking God, confessing their sin, and acknowledging their undone condition, they made themselves aprons of fig leave to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:7). From that day to this the natural man has been at the same foolish, futile task of trying to cover his sin and guilt with some garment of his own making which he trusts will be acceptable to God.

But no dress which the natural man provides for the flesh will ever please God. No matter what material it is made or how beautiful, fitting and durable it may seem to be to the world, it will wither into nothingness, even as Adam's and Eve's aprons of fig leaves, before the righteousness and holiness of God.

No garment of salvation except the one He Himself provides will be acceptable to God. Genesis 3:21, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." By this act, God acknowledged that the shame of Adam and Eve were not groundless and that they did need a covering; but He also showed the utter inadequacy of the one they had provided for themselves, their lack of apprehension of the enormity and heinousness of their sin against Him, and of the nature of the salvation required to restore them to His fellowship.

God had said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." They had eaten. "The wages of sin is death." If they did not die someone acceptable to God must die in their stead. This is the meaning of salvation.

But God had already given the promise of a Saviour-Substitute. The seed of the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's seed. The garments of skin with which the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve were procured through the slaying of animals, through the shedding of blood. By this gracious act of God, the means of salvation was symbolized; the death of His own well-beloved Son was shadowed forth. God Himself furnished the skins, God made the coats, God clothed them in acceptable garments.

Now let us look at some of the aprons of fig leaves with which the natural man is trying to make himself acceptable to God and fit for Heaven.

Salvation through Character

“Character — homebrew” is the sign over the door of the self-righteous man’s life. He has to admit weakness and failure but he does not call sin nor does he grant that he has any great need. There is nothing in him so wrong that he cannot remedy it himself if given time, a proper environment and enlarged opportunities. The self-righteous man thinks that he starts with something already very good, something even with the very essence of the divine in it. His business is to make this good thing gradually better.

In this process of self-cultivation, the self-righteous man measures himself with himself and he is very pleased; he measures himself also with other men and, like the self-righteous Pharisee of Luke 18:9-14, he is more than pleased. He congratulates himself on himself and even commends his virtues to God. But there is one measurement that he has forgotten to take. He has never placed his self-righteous life alongside the spotless, stainless, sinless, life of the Son of Man to see how infinitely far short he falls of righteousness which God accepts. He ignores the fact that the absolute righteousness of God demands nothing less than absolute righteousness in all who are acceptable to Him, which is a demand no human being in himself ever can meet.

Someday when this man stands before the Lord Jesus Christ, once a proffered but a rejected Saviour, now his Judge, he will expect Him to approve this manmade production of righteousness, to pronounce it as good as anything the Lord could have done, and to let him pass into Heaven to abide forever in the presence of an absolutely righteous God.

I was talking once with a friend concerning his need for a Saviour. He was a man of splendid ideals, high standards, and excellent principles. He was cultured, kind, moral, and from a human standpoint, lived what the world would commend as a highly respectable life. When I pressed the necessity of accepting Jesus Christ as his Saviour, he said, “Why do I need anyone to die for me? I do not want any one’s bloodshed for me!” The root of that reply was self-righteousness. That young man was trusting to be saved through character. God looks down upon all such “which trusted in themselves that they were righteous” and says Romans 3:10, 12, “There is none righteous, no, not one. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

And of the righteousness which has been so carefully cultivated He gives His estimate through the mouth of His prophet, Isaiah 64:6, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness’s are as filthy rags, and we do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

To rely upon self-righteousness as the ground of salvation is utterly futile. God declares plainly that His wrath against it will be revealed.

Romans 10:3, “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

Romans 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”

How very different is the self-righteous, a self-made man from the one who has had a glimpse of the Holy One and His righteousness!

Isaiah 6:5, “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

Job 42:5-6, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

1 Timothy 1:15, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief.”

The last quotation is from the lips of a man who, if anyone could have rested upon his own righteousness as a sufficient ground of acceptance with God. With perfect sincerity, he said of himself that “touching the righteousness which is of the law” he was “blameless.” Yet after seeing the Lord of glory he was convinced of the foolishness and futility of such confidence in the flesh. From that time he had but one consuming desire, “that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:6, 9). The only righteousness that makes any man acceptable with God is the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:22-23, “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

No one whose eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts, and who has contrasted his own sinfulness with His holiness will have a shred of hope of acceptance with God through his own character. The man who relies upon any righteousness in himself as his ground of salvation and who refuses Christ’s imputed righteousness as God’s free gift only proves the Word of God that the god of this world has blinded his mind so that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine into his heart.

Salvation through Education

Another bridge which men attempt to erect over the yawning sin-made chasm between God and man is that of education. Ignorance due to lack of opportunity is deemed the cause of much of the sorrow, suffering, and strife, in the world. The cry is, "Give everyone an education and so elevate standards, raise ideals and change environment. By thus creating a desire for better conditions of life a better life itself will eventuate." There are intelligent men and women today who are proclaiming that the one thing needed for the salvation of individuals and of nations is mass education. Knowledge is made the cure for sin.

Such an argument is an absolute fallacy. For to know is but a fragment of man's responsibility in the matter of living and is by far the easier part of the task. Life challenges us to do, above all to be. Knowledge is of no value whatsoever until it has been transmuted into character and conduct. In fact, the Bible tells us in one of its most solemn words that unless it is so transmuted knowledge becomes positive sin. "To him, that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Education has sometimes even led to a deterioration of character and conduct. It has opened new avenue sin to Sin and taught men greater cleverness in the ways of evil. It has not only made men more selfish, more proud, more grasping, but has placed them in positions where their selfishness, ambition, and greed could have full right-of-way against others less favored.

We hear much in certain circles today about religious education and many people believe this to be the sufficient remedy for the need of the world. If religious education means teaching the Word of God itself under the direction and operation of the divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit, with the purpose of securing man's regeneration and renewal, then it is indeed one of the world's greatest and deepest needs. But, if it means urging the natural man to study Christ's teachings and to learn His principles of life for men as individuals and as members of society in order that through obedience to His teaching, through the application of His principles, and through imitation of His example, there may be a reconstruction of human society and amelioration of social wrongs, then it is an absolutely foolish and futile thing.

The natural man could know the content of the teachings of God from Genesis to Revelation and still have no power, and more, no desire to obey them. He might be thoroughly conversant with every Christian principle for the government of man in his personal, social and civic relationships and yet fail to apply them in his own life.

I heard of a group of students who talked loud and long about the selfishness and greed of officials in high places in the government of their country. They took part in patriotic movements to remove these men from office. Yet they themselves were found guilty of taking a "squeeze" from their fellow-students who had entrusted to them the task of buying food under a self-government scheme in operation in the college. In their smaller sphere of activity, they had done exactly what the officials had done in their larger sphere. Any system of religious education which merely unfolds to the natural man the

teachings and principles of Jesus Christ and tells how to apply them in the life of the other fellow is utterly inadequate. The Bible is the only textbook given man on salvation from sin and from cover to cover there is not a ray of hope held out of salvation through education or through anything that aims merely at the improvement of the natural man. In fact, God plainly tells us in the first and second chapters of 1 Corinthians that it is “the wisdom” of the natural man that keeps him from accepting the only way of salvation, Christ crucified. Education, if it is truly Christian, maybe one of the agents used by God to create the desire for salvation but it can never furnish the dynamic which makes salvation possible.

Salvation through Works

One man looks for salvation through character or what he is; another trusts in education or what he knows; while a third seeks it in service or what he does. He believes he can be saved through good works. He comes to God with self-confidence and says, “What shall I do that I might work the works of God?”

God answers his question by asking one which teaches that the natural man can do no good work that will accomplish his salvation.

Jeremiah 13:23, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”

Please note God does not say, “Can the Ethiopian powder or rouge his skin?” That has been done. The question is “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” The natural inference is that it would be changed from its natural color to another. Can that be done?

Suppose a girl from Ethiopia comes for the first time into the presence of a group of fair-skinned girls. Never before has she seen any color of skin but black. She wishes her skin to be fair and determines to do something to make it so. Procuring water and soap she proceeds to lather her face and rubs it vigorously. The process ended she goes triumphantly to the mirror expecting to see a great change. Instead, she confronts the same black skin only a bit more highly polished. She decides that she did not do enough, that she failed to use sufficient water or soap or muscle, so she repeats the process increasing the use of soap, water, and strength. But the second attempt ends in the same bitter disappointment. To change her skin is beyond her power.

”Can the Ethiopian change his skin?“ We are compelled to answer God’s question for His answer to ours depends upon it. If the Ethiopian can change his skin then the natural man will be able to do something to change his sinful heart, he will be able to do good who has always been accustomed to do evil. But, if the Ethiopian cannot change his skin then what must we infer regarding the power of the natural man to change his evil heart? God’s Word gives a conclusive answer.

Jeremiah 2:22, "For though thou wash thee with niter and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God." Through self-cultivation, self-discipline, and self-effort many men and women have been able to accomplish certain reforms within themselves which have made them more acceptable to themselves and to the world but no living person has ever been able to make himself righteous, and without righteousness, no man is acceptable to God.

Another way in which the natural man attempts his own salvation is to do something for God which will be acceptable.

This was Cain's mistake, yea, it was more, it was Cain's sin. Why was Abel's offering accepted and Cain's accepted not? (Genesis 4:4, 5). Because Abel realized that he was a sinner and that the offering he brought to God must confess that fact and be an acknowledgment of his need of another to cleanse him. Cain, on the contrary, brought an offering which revealed no sense of sin but rather of complete self-sufficiency. He offered his best, the work of his hands, the fruitage of his toil. He needed not the help of anyone. And he expected God to accept his gift, the offering of a sinner still in his sins, and to call the account against him squared. Cain did not come to God "by faith" (Heb. 11:4) but "by works."

There is no phase of modern teaching more ancient or pagan than the doctrine proclaimed so generally throughout the world today that we can be made acceptable to God by good works, that we are saved through service. It is indeed true that, if we are saved, we will serve, but it is altogether untrue that we are saved because we serve.

Jews in our Lord's time who were unwilling to acknowledge Him as their Messiah and to accept Him as their Saviour came to Him with the question, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" The reply of the Lord Jesus is very significant. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." But this "good work" they stubbornly refused "to do."

What God required was not that they should do something for Him but that they should accept what He had done for them. The foundation stone of salvation is not what man gives to God but what God gives to man; it is not what man offers to God but what he receives from God.

Romans 4:4-5, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

2 Timothy 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

The Pharisees considered themselves the prophets of religion. They fasted and prayed; they paid tithes and “built the tombs of the prophets and garnished the sepulchers of the righteous.” They did countless good works yet Jesus called them “hypocrites” and the apostle Paul prayed that they might be “saved.” So in this twentieth century, many are deceived into thinking they are saved because they serve tables at a church supper; make garments for the poor or band-aids for the sick; act as chairman of the finance committee to put over a big drive, or contrive schemes for the physical and social betterment of mankind.

Salvation through good works either for God or man is pure paganism. I have a friend in China whose dear old grandmother was an ardent Buddhist. At seventy-six years of age, she rose every morning at four o'clock and spent the hours until noon without food in performing the rites of her heathen worship. She walked long distances to the temple, she burned her bundles of incense and lighted her candles, she gave of her money. Her days were largely spent in religious works but at seventy-six she was still an ignorant, superstitious, idolatrous, unsaved woman. But not one whit more unsaved than the man or woman, even though dressed in cap and gown, who offers to the Saviour who died upon the Cross to redeem him “the stone” of philanthropy, good works, and social service, for “the bread” of faith, adoration, and worship.

Salvation through Religion

Someone has said, “Man is incurably religious.” Another has beautifully written, “God created man a deep and everlasting void. The soul in its highest sense is a vast capacity for God but emptiness without God.” It is most assuredly true that man was made for God and his heart never can be fully satisfied until it is satisfied in Him. It is equally true that God made man not only in His likeness but also with the capacity for fellowship with Him, yes, even for sonship. Therefore God’s heart can never be fully satisfied except as this relationship with man is realized and enjoyed.

The natural man can neither satisfy nor please God (Romans 8:7). Therefore God could never enjoy his presence even were it possible for him to stay in the presence of a holy God. Something must be done by God to make man acceptable to Him.

From the day sin entered into the human race, God has been working to win men and women, one by one, back to Himself. He has sent His messengers, prophets and apostles to open the eyes of sinners and “to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.” At the same time, the devil has been equally busy blinding the minds of men “lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Satan’s path is not altogether smooth. Two forces are working against him. One is the religious instinct in man. He cries out for something he knows he needs. He senses his insufficiency in seasons of trial, suffering, and sorrow; often his heart reaches out for the help and comfort of one stronger than himself. He cannot let loved ones pass out of sight and touch without an insistent longing to know where they have gone and if all is

well. That unsatisfied something in man's soul that cries out to an unknown God is very much against Satan.

The second hindrance to the devil is the Holy Spirit. It is His business to convict of sin, to reveal the love of God in Christ, and to draw the heart of the sinner out in faith and love to God.

Just here the devil reveals himself at his worst. He will lay siege to that unquenchable thing in man's nature which craves an object of worship and hold it for himself. He will delude men into thinking they can be saved by systems of religion which he inspires them to make.

Contrary to the salvation of which Jesus Christ is the source Satan's system is not one and the same for all men alike irrespective of family, race, education, privilege or environment. These man-made, Satan-inspired religions have various names and manifold methods each suited to the type and temperament of the man who believes them. There is one kind for the ignorant and illiterate; another for the educated and erudite; one for the simple and superstitious; another for the wise and cultured; one for the poor; another for the prosperous.

There is a system of religion for the idolater. Satan is an arch-deceiver and his practice of deception is seen in its most cruel and malicious form in idol worship. Even in this twentieth century Satan still holds in his power millions upon millions of men who are worshippers of gods of their own making. They have been led to believe a lie and so have been plunged into dense darkness.

There is a system of religion for the ritualist. In carrying out His eternal purpose in Christ, God called forth a people from among the nations through whom the seed of the woman would come. The Jews were set apart as the people of God by the rite of circumcision. To this God added the covenants and the law so that the worship and service of the Jew were based on a God-appointed, God-honoring, ritualism. Through the manifold ordinances and sacrifices of the Jewish ritualism, God made the Jew familiar with the idea of redemption. Then God raised up prophets who foretold the coming of a Messiah who would be their Redeemer. In the fullness of time, the Saviour was born. The need for sacrifices was passed for the one Sacrifice had offered Himself. But the expounders of the law, the most ardent religionists of Jesus' day instead of receiving Him rejected Him. And why? Because they permitted religious ordinances to take a larger place in their lives than God's redemptive order. They exalted ritualism above righteousness and substituted prayer for penitence, tithing for trust and fasting for faith. There are other great religious systems in the world today in which the real Christ of the Bible, the Redeemer of the Gospels, is veiled through ordinances and ceremonies in which there is no saving power, yet through which countless thousands are deceived into thinking they are made acceptable to God.

There is a system of religion for the rationalist. The pronouncement of the curse upon Satan and the promise of salvation through Christ following the fall precipitated a conflict as we have seen. The conflict begun then has never ceased; it is being waged more fiercely today than ever before. To prevent the execution of the curse and the fulfillment of the promise Satan tried in every conceivable way to destroy the seed of the woman. At the Cross of Calvary, he thought himself triumphant. But the very place of his supposed victory was the place of his judgment and the forerunner of his final doom. Christ arose, the Victim became the Victor. Christ Jesus returned to the glory from whence He came. He went beyond the devil's reach. There is no way in which Satan again can touch or tempt the person of the adorable Lord. How then would he continue the conflict? Now that he could not focus the venom of his hate upon the incarnate Word upon what would he focus it?

The revelation of this conflict is unfolded in a Book. The incarnate Word has gone home to His Father but the written Word is still on earth. In it, the defeat of the devil and the victory of the Christ is recorded in large type. The way of salvation through the atoning death and the triumphant resurrection of the Lord of glory is written in red letters from Genesis to Revelation. This is the Gospel. This Gospel the devil hates with all the hatred of which the father of hate is capable. So against it, he will now direct his attack. Around the Gospel of Christ, the conflict will center henceforth.

The Gospel is in the Bible and the Bible is in the world. It has been printed in hundreds of languages and has gone to the far corners of the earth. More millions of copies of it are being sold annually than of any other book. Men everywhere are reading the Bible and are believing the Gospel. Being saved through it they are taken from Satan's dominion and removed out of his kingdom. What can he do to stop its progress and its power? Destroy it? He has tried that and failed. The Bible is not printed on paper only but it has been graven on human hearts by the Spirit of God so that if every copy of the printed Bible in the world today were destroyed a new copy could be made from its truth stored in human hearts.

Perhaps, then, Satan could ridicule the Bible and hinder its progress and power through scoffing. He has tried that also and failed. He has used some of the world's most brilliant men as his preachers of infidelity and atheism. Today they are in their graves and their words are forgotten while the Bible lives on more powerful than ever.

But is there not a more effectual way of denying the Gospel and of keeping sinners from the benefit and blessing of the salvation it offers? There is and Satan is making use of it in these days in ever-increasing measure. God tells us that the devil's most subtle maneuver in the conflict is to turn the preacher and with the Bible as his textbook to concoct out of it a gospel of his own. When Satan found that attacking the written Word from without failed then he began attacking it from within. As Christ uses men to preach His Gospel so Satan would find men who would consent to become "his ministers." 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself

into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their work.” What would Satan’s gospel be and where would it begin? God’s Gospel is a Gospel of grace and begins with Genesis, chapters 1-3. But how could Satan accept these three chapters as they stand fresh from the heart and hand of God containing as they do the revelation of God’s perfect work in the creation of the universe and man; the invasion of an enemy, he being that enemy; the injection of sin into God’s perfect work; the awful consequence in the fall of Adam and Eve; the terrible curse of God upon himself, upon man and upon the earth; the precious promise of a Saviour and the glorious prophecy of his own defeat through the death upon the Cross? Of course, he could not accept these chapters for in them is the germ of the whole Gospel of man’s salvation.

He would defeat his own purpose if he did so bold and blatant a thing as deliberately to cut these chapters out of the Bible. But the arch-deceiver is quite equal to the emergency. He will preach a gospel that reserves the right of interpretation of the Word of God according to the dictates of reason. He will insist upon a faith that is rational. It is always difficult for reason to accept anything beyond its own range. God thinks and works on the plane of uncreated, divine, unlimited, supernatural life. Man thinks and works on the plane of created, human, limited, natural life. The rationalist refuses to recognize any such dividing line between himself and his Creator. Consequently, he refuses to accept anything, even from God, that goes beyond his reason. So whatever the rationalist believes, his religion must be on his own plane of life — the natural. So a system of religion is framed to suit him. A gospel is manufactured “which is another gospel” (Galatians. 1:6), a clever, malicious counterfeit. Satan knows that he must inspire man to make a religion which does away altogether with God’s revelation of the creation and the fall of man, otherwise how can he dispose of the promise of a Saviour and the prophecy of his own ultimate defeat through Christ’s glorious victory on Calvary and His triumphant return as King?

Consequently, the basic tenet of the rationalist’s system of religion is evolution. Man did not come direct from God’s hands — a perfect work which God Himself pronounced “very good.” God’s first man was not created in the image of One infinitely higher than himself but was evolved from something infinitely lower than himself. This something had evolved through various stages by natural processes until man was produced. So that God’s part in the production of man was not so much that of a Creator as of a semi-divine supervisor or foreman “ of resident natural forces.” In other words, the supernatural in man’s creation was eliminated through evolution. So much for man’s creation in this man-made, Satan-inspired gospel.

How does this gospel of the rationalist deal with sin? Sin is in the world. Sin is in man. How does the rationalist account for its origin and what does he say of its end? He evades the issue altogether by calmly denying the necessity of anyone having such knowledge.

I read recently a chapter on “Sin and its Forgiveness” from the pen of a noted preacher in which he said, “Whence did sin come? What was its origin?”

How did it get into God’s universe? That is a question to which no satisfactory answer has ever yet been given... Jesus is disappointed in His treatment of human sin. The origin of evil He never touched. He left that problem as opaque as it was before He came. He seemed to take it for granted that the origin of evil is a problem to be thought about and worked out in some other world than this... It is not necessary for us to know either the beginning of evil or the end of it; it is enough to know that sin is a burden to the heart of God, and that God has provided a way for our deliverance.” Such deliberate evasion is equivalent to out-and-out denial. For any honest man, whose mind has not been blinded by the god of this world, could not but believe from the reading of Genesis three and Romans five that sin came into this world through Adam who yielded to the will of Satan. Therefore sin must have had its origin in the devil. Jesus, far from leaving this opaque, threw a flood of light upon it when He said that the devil was “a murderer from the beginning... he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). But not only is sin in the world but Christ is also in the world. And He is in the world primarily as a Saviour. He became a Saviour by going to the Cross. His work in this world as Saviour is to draw sinners unto Him for salvation. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” His power of attraction is mighty and permeates the world of humanity today. When once the Lord Jesus Christ is accepted by one as Saviour, yielded to as Lord, and appropriated as Life, then the devil’s power over that life is broken. The devil knows this full well. So what will he do with Christ in the system of religion he inspires men to make, and in the gospel, he inspires them to preach?

Satan cannot do away with Christ altogether for even the most simple would see that any system of religion which claims to be based on the Bible and calls itself Christianity must give Christ someplace. It is a galling thing to do but the devil is compelled for policy’s sake to preach Christ in his “gospel, which is another gospel.” But will he allow “his ministers of righteousness” to preach Jesus Christ as the Saviour from the guilt, penalty, and power of sin through His substitutionary death upon the Cross and His bodily resurrection and His ascension into Heaven as the God-man, the interceding High Priest? Never! To do so would be allowing his own funeral sermon to be preached, fulfilling Genesis 3:15. But he will preach Jesus as the world’s greatest teacher, its purest example, its most ethical leader, its most powerful reformer. He will appeal to the natural man still in his sin and hostility, still under condemnation and the sentence of death, to obey Christ’s teaching, emulate His example, follow His leadership and submit to His reforms. Such a caricature of the real Christ as this is found in the rationalist’s system of religion.

True Christianity is grounded upon the supernatural. Two supernatural facts are its foundation. The first is the supernatural creation of man by the divine Creator whose perfect work was ruined by an enemy through the injection of sin. The second is the supernatural regeneration of man accomplished by God’s grace through the supernatural birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of His Son.

Rationalism, liberalism, modernism or whatever one wishes to call it, is grounded upon the natural. Two fallacies are its foundation. The first is the fashioning of man through evolution by which natural process he will continue to grow from the imperfect to the perfect. The second is the natural reformation of man accomplished through self-development by the help of a human Jesus, whose earthly life furnishes an example to be imitated, whose teachings provide a rule for right living, and whose principles constitute a guide for the overcoming of evil and the gradual betterment of individual and corporate life.

There is, then, a system of religion made by man but inspired by Satan. It is a religion which eliminates the supernatural. I am speaking now of the system not of the man who accepts it: of modernism not of the modernist. There are varying degrees and grades of faith and of unbelief in those who subscribe to this false system of religion. Some who call themselves modernists were brought up and nourished on the fundamental truths of evangelical Christianity and there is now in their belief a strange mixture of the false and the true. Our purpose in writing this is not to budge any man but to warn any who may be putting confidence for salvation in this manmade, Satan-inspired system of religion. There is a gospel of Satan and a Gospel of Christ; the one is the exact antithesis of the other. Satan's gospel has no place for the grace of God. Satan's gospel reverses God's estimate of the natural man. It does not admit that in himself he is hopelessly incurable and incorrigible, even though it does have to say that he is still imperfect. The basic tenet of his gospel is man's natural worthiness which can be increased and for which man will take to himself the glory. Satan's gospel admits the natural man's need for spiritual garments, but it teaches men that these garments can be made by themselves and urges them to borrow the pattern from the earthly life of Jesus and then make the garments to fit themselves. In Satan's gospel, the sinner does not penitently beseech God to save him but he politely requests God to help him save himself and then endorse what he has done.

The Gospel of Christ has a place for nothing but the grace of God by which salvation is provided that the sinner accepts by faith as a gift. God's Gospel declares that the natural man is a sinner, a rebel and an outlaw and that he is separated from God and condemned by God. In God's Gospel, the sinner admits that this is his standing and his state before God and that he is absolutely helpless to change it and therefore hopeless. He comes to God in true penitence and cries to God for salvation. The basic tenet of God's Gospel is the infinite worth of His Son and the worthiness of his finished work of redemption. God's Gospel declares the spiritual nakedness of the natural man and his inability to stand in the presence of God unless clothed in the garment of His Son's righteousness which He will graciously bestow upon all who will accept Him by faith. Which Gospel are you believing? There is but one Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation. Anything which departs an iota from the truth of that Gospel is "another gospel," even the gospel of Satan.

Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth."

Galatians 1:6-9, “ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another: but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed.”

We have been facing the question, “What must I do to be saved?” and endeavoring to answer it. I trust it has been made clear that salvation does not consist in anything that man makes of himself or that education and environment make of him. Nor does it consist in anything that he does either for God or for man. Neither is salvation a mere matter of a changed manner of living. It does not mean the elevation of the life of the natural man to a better state of living still on the natural plane. As long as he remains on the plane of the natural he is unsaved, no matter how cultured, educated, moral or even religious he is.

Salvation is not man’s work for God but God’s work for man. Salvation calls us to put our faith not in what man is or does but in what Christ is and has done. Salvation’s first concern is not what kind of a life a man lives but what is his relationship to God. So its first dealing is not with the good in man but with the bad. Salvation does not try to improve the standing and state of the natural man through reformation but it transfers him into a totally new sphere of life through regeneration.

Every attempt to save the natural man through character, education, good works or religion will prove utterly futile because it has failed to deal effectually with that trinity of evil, sin, self, and Satan. Anything that leaves a man “in Adam,” “in the flesh,” and under “the power of Satan” is not salvation and is not acceptable to God. Dear reader, which way are you going to take?

Will, you proudly and arrogantly try to save yourself or will you humbly and penitently accept the salvation provided for you in Another? Will you go the way of Cain, who presented to God as a sacrifice the finest fruit of his garden and the best product of his toil, or will you go the way of Abel who acknowledged his need of a Saviour and accepted by faith God’s sacrifice? Will you attempt to secure access to and acceptability with God on the ground of good works or will you rest on the finished work of God’s Son? Will you try to improve the old sinful nature which is your inheritance in Adam or will you partake by faith of that new divine nature which God bestows in Christ? Will you try to conform your character and conduct to the standards of Satan’s worldly system or will you yield yourself to Christ to be transformed into His image through the infilling of the Holy Spirit?

Will you follow Satan’s way or God’s? Upon your answer to this question your present happiness and your eternal destiny depend.

