

CHRIST OR CONDEMNATION

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18.

These words set forth the issues of life and death. They comprehend in themselves the salvation of all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and assert the damnation of all who refuse to believe on Christ. These words are not the ponderings of philosophers or the mere memoirs of men. They are as certain as that light and heat come and go with the sun. These words are true. On them the signature of God is indelibly stamped. Glory in these words that refer to the attainment of the soul's greatest need, which is salvation from sin and its consequences.

The salvation of one's soul is so important that it should receive his first and most serious consideration. The way of salvation is stated in the Word of God in the very plainest terms, and, yet, perhaps there is no truth about which more errors have been uttered than concerning the faith which results in the salvation of the soul.

The universal testimony of the Scriptures is that man by nature, by thought, by word and by deed is the perpetrator of evil. All men have turned to their own ways. All are unclean. Solomon described the sinful nature of man in these words: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Sin extends to each member of the human family. No member of the human race has escaped sin's corruption or is immune to it.

Unbelief is a sin. The Word of God declares it. It should not require any argument to prove that it is a sin not to believe God. It is a sin for a creature to doubt the Word of his Maker.

Unbelief is the root out of which every iniquity and transgression grow. There is not a sin which unbelief will not beget. Everything that is evil and vile lies crouched in and around that one word, unbelief. If men believed God and the Scriptures, they would turn from their sins and walk in the light.

Unbelief not only begets sin, but it also fosters it. It prevents the Word of God from having its rightful effect upon the soul. When men do not believe the Scriptures, they can listen to the story of Calvary and not be touched. They can be told the story of Christ's love and not be affected. Unbelief sears the conscience, warps the mind and makes impotent the will. It devaluates every service that a man can render.

In the spiritual life unbelief interposes between the soul and all heavenly blessings. It shuts off communication from the source of all glad tidings. The one who has not received Christ as his Saviour lives under condemnation. Until he believes on Him, the sentence of condemnation will never be lifted.

In the Word of God I am told to believe. What am I to believe? I am bidden to look. To what am I to look? What is to be the object of my belief? The reply is very simple. The object of faith is Christ Jesus. With the eye of faith look to Christ as God. Let thy faith behold Him in His perfect righteousness. See Him keeping the law to perfection, obeying His Father in everything and preserving His integrity without flaw. But,

be sure that your faith fixes itself upon Christ dying for your sins. Believe on Him whose blood was poured out for you on Calvary's cross. Let your faith behold Christ arising from the dead. He is to be the sole object of your faith for the pardon of your sin and the salvation of your soul.

Whence does faith come? "Faith cometh by hearing." After hearing the gospel of Christ, faith will come as the result of a sense of need. Man realizes his need of a Saviour, learns that Christ is just the Saviour whom he needs, and, because of his inability to help or save himself, believes on Him. How does man come to have this sense of need? It is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. No man comes to Christ except the Holy Spirit uses the gospel of Christ to convict him and to draw him. He draws men to Christ by convincing them that if they do not believe on the Saviour they will perish. The ground on which a man comes to Christ is that of a sinner in dire need of salvation.

How can one get salvation? Peter said that there is just one way to be saved. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Can anyone, anywhere in the world, under any sort of conditions, be saved without accepting Christ as a personal Saviour? God's Word teaches that one cannot be saved without or apart from Christ. He may do everything that a man can do, but, if he does not believe on Christ, he will never be saved. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

In salvation, as taught in the Scriptures, there is deliverance from sin. This deliverance includes pardon, forgiveness and cleansing. It includes deliverance from the guilt of sin, the condemnation of sin, the power of sin, the habit of sin and the effect of sin. The one who is thus saved is made a new creature in Christ. Something is imparted to him in salvation which he did not have before. He is brought by spiritual birth into the family of the redeemed. He becomes a partaker of the divine nature.

Can man forgive his own sins? Can he save himself? No! If not, then he must have help from someone outside of self who can secure salvation for him. People are depending upon various things for salvation. One man said he thought God was keeping books, in which on one side of the ledger He put all the bad deeds one did, and on the other side of the ledger He put all the good deeds, and, if one did more good deeds than bad deeds, he would be saved. He went on to say, "I am trying to do more good deeds than bad deeds, so that at the end I will be saved." It is a certainty that he did not understand the scriptures. People are not saved by their deeds but by Jesus Christ. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

There are those who put their dependence in church membership for salvation. A New Testament church is a great institution; in fact, a divine one, but it does not save anybody. Our Lord established it for the purpose of preaching the gospel of Christ, so that people might trust Him for salvation. Church membership, observing the ordinances, sincerity, education, culture, refinement and so-called good deeds cannot save anybody. There is only One Who can save and that is Jesus Christ. Are you trusting in Him alone to save you? He is the only One Who can do it.

Remember that this sentence of condemnation is self-imposed. It has often been considered an arbitrary decree by a despotic God upon Whom there are no restraints and Who is under no obligation to account for His decision. Christ came not to condemn but to save those who were already condemned.

"He that believeth on him is not condemned." What a satisfactory declaration! You know that in our courts of law a verdict of "not guilty" amounts to an acquittal, and the prisoner is discharged immediately. Thus it is in the language of the gospel; a sentence of "not condemned" implies the justification of the sinner. That means the believer in Christ receives now a present justification. Faith does not produce its fruits in the future, but now. The thief on the cross was justified the moment that he turned his eye of faith to Christ, Who was hanging by his side. After all the years of his faithful service, Paul was not any more justified than was the penitent thief without any service at all. Even now our sins are pardoned, and we stand in the sight of God as though we had never been guilty. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). In the moment you and I believed, it was said of us, "He is not condemned." Many days and years have passed since then, but it is as true of us now as it was then. From the moment you believe on Christ, God ceases to look upon you as being guilty, for He never looks upon you apart from Christ.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The plan is to believe in Christ Who was forsaken of God that He might bring us to God. No man is good enough to be saved, and no man is so bad that he cannot be saved. No work of righteousness can merit salvation if we do not believe. No work of unrighteousness can forfeit salvation if we do believe. Salvation is a free gift. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). One is not saved by works but for works. He works from the cross and not to the cross. "Believeth" denies salvation by character, refutes salvation by works, contradicts salvation by culture, disproves salvation by feeling and declares salvation by trust. To reach heaven there is but one place from which to start, and that is Calvary. There is but one way to heaven, and that is Christ. At what time should we believe on the Son of God? The time is now. Nobody is justified in putting off believing in Christ for one minute, hour or day. Life is too short for us to be saying, "Tomorrow." "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Believe on Christ now.