

Good News

Salvation!



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Salvation!



The Gospel is good news. On that night, two thousand years ago, when Jesus was born, the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds, 'Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord' (Luke 2:10-11). Then the sky was visibly filled with angels who unitedly praised God saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men' (v.14). But why is this such good news? Why the great joy? What is the peace spoken of here? It is described as being for all people. Do you have it? In this article I would like to ask some basic questions which get at the heart of this wonderful salvation which God offers to us.

Why do I need to be saved?

No question is more basic than this one. Many people feel no desire for salvation and yet all need to be saved. Are you saved? But why do you need to be saved? Simply because you are a sinner and all sins are going to be punished. God created us to glorify Him – to worship, praise and serve Him – and also to enjoy Him. Interestingly, and I can personally assure you of it, there is actually nothing in life that gives us more enjoyment than glorifying Him. God loves to bless those who spend their lives pleasing Him. Initially all went well with Adam and Eve, our first parents in the Garden of Eden. But then Satan came to them, tempted them to sin by eating the forbidden fruit, promised that they would be like God if they did, and they listened, did as he said and sinned. As a result they were put out of the garden and into a state of sin and misery. We are now all born with a bent to evil. People ask where does pain, sickness, tragedy and death come from. The answer is here. It is God's punishment on sin and sadly we are all sinners. God gave us Ten Commandments. None of us keeps any of them. God has said, you shall not covet, you shall not lust and you shall not be angry. What about you? Are you not a sinner – a commandment breaker? Because God is so great, glorious and good, and because He has made us and therefore we belong totally to Him, even the smallest sin against God is terribly wrong and will be punished by an eternity in Hell. Remember there is a Judgment Day at the end of our lives in this world. Will it be heaven or Hell for you? You and I need to be saved from Hell.

Can we save ourselves?

Many people think they can save themselves. They argue that if they do sufficient good deeds that will balance out the

evil which they have done. So they get involved with various charities – they help the sick, the abused, the homeless and the hungry. Now all this is good but it is simply our duty. Wicked Cain asked 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Of course he is and so are you and I. God's commandment demands that you love your neighbour just as you love yourself and Jesus includes your enemy amongst those you must love (Matthew 5:44). On another occasion Jesus said, 'When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do' (Luke 17:10). We should be doing good works all the time and if not we are guilty. So good works cannot balance out our bad deeds.

Others try to save themselves by involvement in religious worship and activity. But the one thing that distinguishes the true Christian religion from every other form of Christianity and from every other religion is that prayers, worship and ritual will not save. Others think that if they punish themselves this will please God. They deprive themselves of food and warmth and even beat their bodies but why should that impress or please God? He has no pleasure in us causing ourselves pain. Actually there is nothing we can do to earn salvation.

What has God done to save us?

The best known verse in the Bible tells us that '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). God in His amazing love gave to us the most precious thing He had – His own Son. He spared not His own Son (Romans 8:32), but sent Him into this world to die for our sins. The Son of God became our substitute, taking on Himself our sin and then the punishment due for our sins. God is so just and holy that He cannot just overlook sin and pardon it. Sin demands punishment and the only way we could escape is by the Son of God suffering in our room and place. He endured the Hell which we deserve on the cross so that we would enjoy Heaven. God the Father planned it and sent His Son. God the Son came and purchased salvation for us with His life blood. God the Holy Spirit applies this salvation to us making it personally ours. Salvation is all God's work and we must give Him all the glory for it.

What must I do to be saved?

The Bible says: 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Romans 10:13). Christ has done all that is required. Fall down before Him and worship Him. Pray to

Him, calling upon Him for salvation. The 'whosoever' invites everyone in the world to call. Whoever you are, whatever your background, whatever your religion or lack of it, whatever sins you have committed, ask Him and He will save you. Paul makes the good news of the Gospel plain. It is 'the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation' (Romans 10:8-10). Repent, turning from your evil ways and trust in Christ and you will immediately be saved.

What happens when I am saved?

When a person is saved a huge change takes place. It is described in the Scriptures as the new birth, or new creation, or resurrection. Not only are your sins pardoned but you are transformed into a new person. You have new desires. The rule of sin and Satan over you is broken. You are liberated and set free from the addiction to sin. The Holy Spirit comes to live in your heart empowering you to live for God. Many

people think I could never change myself to be a Christian or keep it going once I became one. Nothing is truer than that. But as a real born again Christian God works mightily in your life delivering you from the craving to sin and enabling you to love God.

What am I saved to?

You are saved from Hell for Heaven. You are given a wonderful future of everlasting happiness. Even in this life there is an amazing sense of liberty, peace and joy that comes into your life. Guilt is gone. You now have a purpose and direction to your life. You have a guide and true friend who is always with you and will never leave you.

When should I seek salvation?

Many think they are too young to give their life to Christ. They promise themselves and others that one day they will make their peace with God. But the Bible says today is the day of salvation (Hebrews 3:7). Others left it for a future date and are today in hell. Death can come suddenly and unexpectedly. Prepare to meet your God! Make peace with Him today! Trust in Christ!



Trusting In His Grace

Shanmugam Partheepan (Knightswood, Glasgow)

I was born into a Hindu family in the north of Sri Lanka. When I was young we were very poor. At the time my parents moved toward Christianity because of the charity given out by a local Christian church. I was baptised but in my heart I had no real faith in God. I studied at a Christian school called Jaffna College. I became very involved in sports and in some I excelled. I also had a good reputation among the students and teachers and so had many privileges. This meant I had a strong temptation to trust in myself and my own gifts and abilities. I proudly felt that I was far better than others and was confident that I would succeed and achieve great things for myself. Jaffna College gave me a letter of high commendation for my achievements and services rendered to the school.

For my further education and job opportunities I moved to Colombo (capital of Sri Lanka). A friend invited me to a church where we had social events and played games. I became very involved with the youth group. Soon I became leader. When there were conflicts in the church I would ask young people to express their views. I tried to do much for God and when there was any wrong I tried to put it right. Church families trusted me. I was confident I could solve problems by my own ability. I tried to fight for what was right. I was happy in my life.

Work and Pleasure

A major private firm employed me and entrusted me with a high responsibility. My earnings were good and having lots of friends I was happy. But I had no God. I thought of life as a kite which will fly higher and higher. But when the wind is gone it will come down. I thought little about God. Rather, God seemed to be a tool to justify the proud, high-handed ways of the rich and a means to comfort the poor. Men use God for their own ends. Justice on earth and love for all men was the philosophy I followed. Yet, though I was stubborn and determined in these things, I had no peace in my heart. At this time I was invited to some Bible studies at Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Chapel (CRPC). I thought of these people also as hypocrites, living a false life.

Illness and Serious Thoughts

However at this time I was brought down with an illness and now alone I began to reflect on my life. I thought of death. I began to feel distressed and how lost I was. I felt there was a God, but who was this God? I went back again to CRPC. At a worship service I heard about Christ Jesus who is truly God and that He came into this world because God loved men like me. I was convicted of my sin and guilt before God especially through the Bible words, 'For all have

sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (Romans 3:23-24). God, who opened the wounds of my sins, began to heal me through His grace in Christ. Through God's Word I believed and knew that Christ Jesus was my righteousness and that in Him I was forgiven and accepted by God

Christ will save and keep all those that come to Him. They will be safe in this life and in the life to come. God made me alive by His Holy Spirit and I believed His Word in 1 John 1:8-9, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. This made me rejoice. I immediately felt all the load of sin and guilt placed on Jesus at the cross of Calvary and in dying for me He gave me eternal life. Jesus had set me free and now I belonged to the living God. I saw that the stable, lasting life is in heaven. I had the assurance that I would go to heaven to be with God forever.

Telling Friends

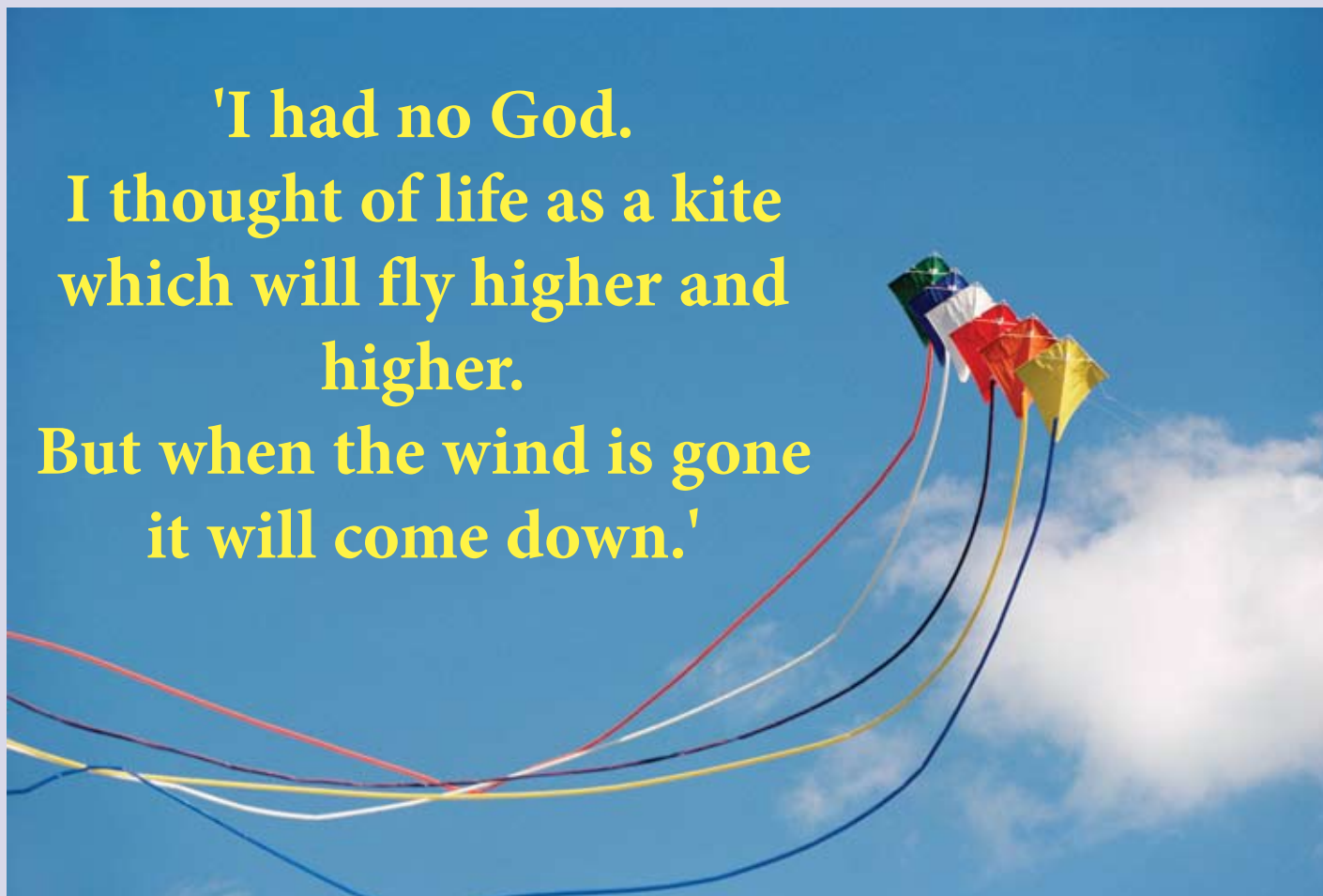
Now I began to tell this to my friends. They began to argue against my testimony to Jesus and started to move away from me. They wanted to be with the world and I realised that friendships not built by Christ will break. When I told them of the need for repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ they hid themselves in the world. They argued for the teachings of the liberal church which was that all religions are basically the same, and that Jesus will save everyone and

that all people will go to heaven. I was grieved to see how deceived they were and that they liked to remain so. This hurt me much.

From 1st January 2004 I took a firm decision to be a member of the Bible-centred church meeting at CRPC. I personally came to know the peace of the Lord Jesus, though there was a time of deep misery over my own sinfulness. As I grew in the faith, I realised that the labourers who go out with the good news about Jesus are few in Sri Lanka. Jesus had given His life for me so that I would have eternal life. Should I not give my life to make Him known? I wanted to serve Him more. I asked God to show me how I could do that – to do more for the glory of God. He was pleased not only to save me from sin and its condemnation but now to separate me from the world to serve Him. Therefore late in 2004 I gave my life to God to become a full-time servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the present time I am in Scotland training to be a minister.

Dear friends, if your life and future are not built on Jesus Christ, one day you will see how you have been deceived by sin and the world. It is only a life built on Jesus and His Word that will truly have peace, joy and satisfaction in this world. If you leave your past sinful, selfish ways and turn to Jesus, you and your family will be saved and God's peace will be yours now and God's heaven yours in the future.

I knew the high life of the world and also its deep emptiness. But now I have the joy and satisfaction of knowing the salvation of God in Jesus Christ. Will you come to Christ too?



'I Want to Break Free'

Rev Gavin Beers (Ayr)

Depending on your age you might remember these words from the title of a famous pop-song in the 1980s. They express the sentiments of many people in society today. Someone might desire to break free from an addiction, for another it could be from a relationship, for many it is from poverty and unemployment.

A Sense of Imprisonment

The fact that we feel like this is an admission, conscious or not, that we have a sense of being in a prison from which we wish to escape. However, the things we desire to escape from are usually only symptoms of something much more serious – Sin.

Christians are often thought to be in bondage to rules and regulations. Maybe you have thought this while thinking you yourself are free. You appear to be free but really, deep down, you are conscious of something tying you, restraining you and keeping you back. Actually it is more accurate to view all men as slaves of something. The issue is really this: Who is your master?

Slaves of Sin or Righteousness

In the book of Romans God describes all men as being naturally the 'servants' or 'slaves' of sin (Romans 6:17). That means you are servants of a vicious, uncompromising master who promises you the world but who consistently denies you all he promised. It is no wonder you want to break free!

On the other hand, Christians are the 'servants' of righteousness (Rom.6:18). You can't grasp this if you are not a believer but, amazingly, there comes with this being

'servants' an indescribable sense of freedom. Looking back at our past sins there is a sense of shame, but above all this there is now the joy of freedom and we walk a new path of 'liberty', loving all God's commandments.

The Great Liberator

Christ is the one who frees us. He came to release men from the bondage of sin and make them His disciples. He offers pardon, forgiveness and freedom in the Gospel. He came 'to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound' (Isaiah 61:1). God said through Moses to Pharaoh, 'Let my people go!' He says the same to Satan today.

God calls you to take Jesus as your Saviour and Lord. You must change your master! You will discover that, unlike serving sin and Satan, serving Christ is true joy and real liberty. He rightly says, 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light' and 'ye shall find rest unto your souls' (Matthew 11:29-30).

You Want to Break Free: Then Come to Christ

'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed' (John 8:36). God created us to glorify and enjoy Himself. We will therefore never be happy and satisfied unless we are doing that. That is the way we are made. Jesus says to you, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28). You need Christ's help.

Break Free! Follow Christ!



Global Warming

Rev John Keddie (Struan, Isle of Skye)



What is most on people's minds these days when they think of life on this small planet? It seems to be Global Warming. Huge publicity was given to the recent conference in Copenhagen. What's going on? It seems that the earth is heating up. Life on this earth will be limited if we don't do something about it. Many scientists say that global warming has arisen from a build up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and that human activity has contributed greatly to this. It is described as a 'greenhouse effect'. Weather patterns, they say, will change; ice sheets will melt; water levels will rise, and so on. Some scientists are sceptical and say it is not human action but a natural phenomenon and that climate has always gone through cyclical patterns. Who are right? Only time will tell. Yet on the whole temperatures are rising. Spring appears to come earlier each year. Ice caps are melting. Documentaries produced have a 'doomsday scenario' feel about them. What is the biblical/Christian position on this? Where do we start?

1. This World is God's World (Genesis 1)

We start with creation. This world is a result of divine creation. No science can disprove this. We recognise in creation a dazzling order and design and complexity. We have no difficulty in going to an Art Gallery and looking at paintings and recognising the work of the artists, nor in going to a museum, seeing the array of machinery and recognising the work of inventors and designers and manufacturers. We just need to look at the marvellous intricacy of our eyes or peer through a microscope at the smallest natural organisms to recognise amazing complexity and design. But who designed the natural world? The Creator. Admittedly this is a matter of faith. In the letter to the Hebrews we read: 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear' (11:3). There is nothing unreasonable in this. We recognise that this understanding of nature gives meaning/purpose. You cannot have purpose in this world without a Creator. But of course if there is a Creator this puts man on the back foot: What is your responsibility to Him? What are you doing with your life? As His creature you are answerable to Him. Again in

Hebrews we read: 'without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him' (11:6). So, this world, in the Christian perspective based upon the Scriptures, is a creation of God.

2. This world has been spoilt by man (Genesis 3)

Is the creation the same as when it came from the Creator's hand? No, it isn't perfect now. Things go wrong. Everything was perfect in the beginning. We are told in Genesis that 'God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good' (1:31). But now there is death. There are floods and volcanoes. There are monsoons and droughts. Nothing lives any great length of time. How did this come about? In Genesis 3 we are told about the Fall of man into sin and how it affected creation. Man, created perfect, disobeyed God and gave place to sin. That is how death and destruction entered. After sin entered the experience of the first people, Adam and Eve, God said to them: 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return' (3:17-19). In other words, the sin of man affected the creation too. Paul writes: 'we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' (8:22). When we look at what is happening at present with alleged global warming, whether the reasons be 'natural' or mainly a result of 'human activity' through excessive 'carbon emissions' we see a creation 'groaning and labouring' on account of man's sin. Even his best stewardship of earth's resources will be tainted by sin. But what is going to happen to this world?

3. This world is going to be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10)

How is the world going to end? What does the Bible say? In 2 Peter we read about 'the day of the Lord' which is to be taken as the day of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That day will coincide with the end of human history. Peter writes: 'The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up' (v10). There is coming a day in which a great burn-up will take

place. No doubt natural elements will be involved, but above all it will take place in accordance with the purpose and plan of God. The present order of things will come to a dramatic end. Peter speaks literally here of destruction by fire. All nature will be destroyed and also the products of man. We get attached to possessions and places and cultural things. These will all burn up. Therefore it doesn't make sense to be too attached to this world or anything that is in it. The protesters and no doubt some of the delegates to the Climate Change Summit were looking to 'save the World'. The truth is, there is no saving of this world. People should not be careless in the use of earth's resources, and should aim to reduce carbon emissions. Yet realism is needed about the effects of sin in the world and because of this its inevitable demise. There should be a greater concern for the next world than for this one, which, after all, is 'passing away'. A proper reaction to the question of climate change, global warming and the future of this world is: What should I be doing now in view of the coming destruction of this present evil world?

4. This world and all its inhabitants should turn to God (2 Peter 3:11)

Peter puts it straight: 'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy

conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?' (v11). The answer is plain: we should be a people who are holy, godly, looking for and preparing for the coming again of Christ which will coincide with the last day of this world. People may protest about climate change induced by human factors; they may agitate for changes in carbon emissions to 'save the world'. The truth is, what people need to do is turn to God. The concern for 'climate change' is perhaps well-meant. It is good that people are concerned about the environment. Whether they will do without comforts and conveniences which are greedy of precious resources; or whether the developing nations will do without development to 'save the world' is not at all certain, rather knowing human nature it is unlikely. But the most important thing for anyone on this planet is personal repentance. The end of the world is coming whatever man does about carbon emissions! There is only one Saviour in this world, and it isn't any head of state or any Climate Change Conference, it is Christ, the coming-again King and the One through whom this world and all its inhabitants will be judged. Have you taken Him as your Saviour and are you preparing for the new heavens and new earth?



From Drink to Christ

Paul Horwood (Inverness)

Drink

A slight change came when I met a chap who was far more sensible. He was a fairly normal fellow and we got on really well and became good friends for many years. The old life of fighting and drugs was left behind, but the drinking and womanising continued unabated. Drinking was still a very big part of my life. But I was living a double life, as when with friends I would be the 'life and soul' of the party and very wild, but when by myself I was depressed and lonely. My drinking habits got worse to the point that I was bordering on alcoholism. Most nights would be spent in a drunken stupor and I was now drinking before I went to work as well. My life was at a total all time low and spiralling downwards. At desperate times I would seriously consider suicide. I had had enough of life and the personal pain of it. I wanted to be out of it.

God Enters

It was at this point that God came into my life, even though I was not looking for God. One evening after the pub, I met my wife-to-be, Alex, in a petrol station of all places. God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform!

Within three months, I proposed to Alex and she accepted with a condition that she would only marry me if I went to church with her every Sunday, twice. Well, I loved her enough to agree, so before we got married she took me to the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. The Minister, Peter Masters, preached about people being great sinners and I found it almost unbearable to listen to. I did not think I would be able to 'endure' this week after week, but on the way out, we met some of Alex' friends whom I really liked. They were real people and very loving. This changed my thinking and I felt that they were a great witness.

The Hammer

We were married and moved soon after this and attended a Baptist church in Farnham, Surrey. It was here that God entered my life and my heart. The Minister preached and God broke my heart! It was the hammer of God's love penetrating a very hard heart. Tears flowed.

We then moved in with my wife's parents, as we sold our house and could not find one. We spent nine beautiful months there. They are wonderful Christians and it was again part of God's plan. They were a wonderful testimony. We then found a home of our own and moved into it. It was here that God continued the work and the 'Hammer' was once again brought down upon the heart. Every week at church, it seemed as though the Lord was breaking down the walls of my heart and the tears would flow. I felt every

sermon was to me alone. The Bible revealed more of my sinful nature and so did the preaching of the word, even the songs of praise revealed my wretchedness. I realised that I had to repent of all my sins and began to seek the Lord with all my heart.

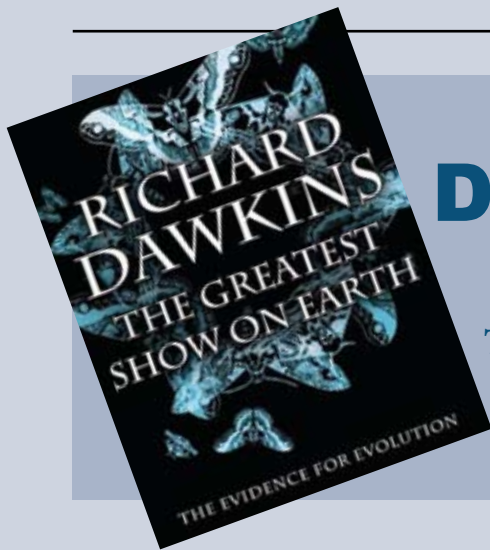
Changed Life

My work revolved around the construction industry and I had to work around the South of England. One site was in Camberley, Surrey and it was here that I had spent my wild days, fighting, drinking, womanising and drug taking. I never wanted to go to this site for fear of meeting 'friends' from my past, as it was a place at which I thought some would be working. It was here that God was to bring me face to face with my past. I had a number of rough characters working for me and one I had told about my past, but he didn't believe how bad I had been. Whilst on site, I stood listening to the same employee up a ladder talking over a fence to someone whom I could not see. Then a head came over the fence and the face was one from my past and the worst part of it. He and I had been involved in some bad fights and many other things. He was surprised to see me and then went on to talk about the past and what we had done and what had happened to people since. The man working for me was listening to all that was said and on the way home commented, 'I know that you said your life had been bad, but I did not think it was that bad!'

I was a broken man and at that point realised that God had been mightily working in my life and had now brought me from darkness into His wonderful light. When I got home, I broke down in tears for the Goodness I had found. I realised that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that He had even saved me.

'It was here that God entered my life and my heart. The Minister preached and God broke my heart! It was the hammer of God's love penetrating a very hard heart. Tears flowed.'





Dawkins and Evolution

Rev William Macleod

The Greatest Show on Earth – The Evidence for Evolution

Richard Dawkins, Bantam Press, hbk, 470pp, £20.00

An atheist friend gave me a copy of Dawkins' Greatest Show on Earth for Christmas. Although life is busy, I felt I should give the time required to read this book which presumably is the best book on the evidence for evolution. When I began reading, it was with a sense of trepidation. Despite my strong beliefs, was I going to find myself overwhelmed? Actually, I was surprised at how weak the case for evolution is.

There is no doubting Dawkins' vast knowledge of his subject, his very considerable intellectual ability and his gifts of communication. The book is well-written and gives many fascinating insights to the marvels of the world around us. Dawkins is frustrated and angered that so many people still don't believe in evolution and indeed that their numbers are growing.

Selective Breeding

His argument begins with 'Dogs, cows and cabbages'. All dogs come from wolves which over the centuries have been domesticated and bred selectively. We now have enormous Great Danes and tiny Chihuahuas. There, says Dawkins, is evolution taking place before our very eyes! Yet, as he himself says, under the skin the Great Dane and tiny Chihuahua is only a wolf! No sane antievolutionist would argue against the evolving of certain limited characteristics (micro-evolution) through selective breeding. But they are all just dogs and can be crossbred with one another. No new genus is produced. There appear also to be breeding limits as to, for example, size. Recently vets have been complaining that some small dogs' skulls are too small for their brains. Similarly a whole related family of plants have been developed from wild cabbages. This is not what the world regards as evolution (macro-evolution). In no way is this evidence for even one step in the direction of the evolution of a new genus.

Natural Selection

The next chapter deals with natural selection which is seen as the great tool for producing macro-evolution. Again we have no problem with the idea of natural selection. We are aware that it is constantly at work in the world around us. This chapter has much fascinating information. Insects, which are essential for the cross pollination of plants, can have an impact by being attracted to the most colourful flowers. These flowers will then tend to predominate over

the less attractive ones. Similarly the insects best at obtaining the nectar from the plants will thrive at the expense of the others. There will be gradual changes because of this. But again these changes are within limits. There is a sexual selection with peahens being attracted to the most colourful peacocks and a correcting factor here is that colourful peacocks will also catch the eye of predators.

Dating

Dawkins then turns to radioactive clocks to measure the age of rocks. It is from these that vast ages for the earth are calculated. The potassium argon clock for example assumes that when the rock solidified there was no argon present and all the argon comes from the decay of the potassium. But what if there was argon present from the beginning? We believe in six-day creation as taught in the Bible. We are not told in the Scriptures the exact age of the earth but we can assume from the data given that it should be measured in thousands of years rather than billions. So how are we to equate this tiny age with the vast ages that the various radioactive clocks demand? Well, we have to ask, how did the earth begin? Did God create it as a ball of molten rock, wait for it to cool down and gradually erode to form sand and gravel? No, it was created as a habitable earth with soil composed of gravel, clay and decaying vegetable matter. It had the sort of landscape which we see today. There were trees created and I believe some of these were fully grown the day they were created and may have had rings giving an apparent age. Adam was created not as a baby but as a full grown man, perhaps of an apparent age of 30 years. So it was a mature earth of an apparent age which God created. This makes the giving of a true age to the earth very difficult for the scientist who ignores the Bible.

Before our very eyes

For Dawkins I believe that this next chapter entitled, 'Before our very eyes', is the most important in the book. Very clever experiments were carried out with the bacteria E coli and this bacteria was carefully observed through 45,000 generations. What was discovered? The size of the bacteria increased with each passing generation and also its ability to make maximum use of a limited supply of glucose (food). Then one of the flasks showed a dramatic improvement. Not only was there glucose in the flasks there was also citrate which is

normally indigestible to the E coli but in this flask the E coli had mutated and so was able to utilise the citrate as food. So how do we assess this? We see a natural selection process whereby the E coli which is best able to survive a shortage of food multiplies at the expense of the rest and in the flask where the citrate is broken down we have a new strain of E coli developed. But is this macro-evolution? No, because no new genus is developed. There is no coming together of two cells to form something more complicated. There is no growing of arms, legs or tail. After all these generations we simply have a new strain of E coli. It is just the same as breeding a dog whose metabolism rate is such that it can survive on less food than other dogs.

It was also shown in this experiment that to produce this change two mutations were required. Mutation A had no beneficial effect but was required before Mutation B could change the E coli so as to be able to feed on the citrate. Here Dawkins finds proof that the 'irreducible complexity' argument of those who believe in Intelligent Design is proved wrong. Wait a minute! We have two factors here which have to be present – the first of which has neither a negative nor a positive effect – only two factors. How many factors are required to be present together for, for example, blood clotting to work? And further some of these would be destructive if present on their own. Dawkins must think people are terribly gullible – and sadly many are!

Missing links

When we come to the subject of missing links in the fossil record, great faith is placed in the theory of evolution and

then the existing data are fitted in. Dawkins finds many of what were regarded as missing links eg in the development of whales. There is a genetic similarity between whales and hippos, therefore both must have developed from the same ancestor. Could there be another explanation – that God made us all of the same basic materials and chose that some animals be more closely related genetically than others? Fossils of various mammals are presented, supposedly demonstrating how a grass-eating ancestor which originally had come from the sea returned to the sea and developed into a whale. Now in Dawkins' way of explaining what happened, all changes are tiny, so over millions of years the transition from for example feet to fins took place. For me the missing links are the fossils with half hind feet and half fins or the beginnings of fins on the tail. Some fish are genetically more like humans than like other fish. This simply proves to me that tracing evolutionary history by means of genetics is flawed.

In dealing with the history of man Dawkins reckons that there are many missing links but again it is interesting that he admits that they belong to the ape-like humans rather than to the human-like apes. An examination of modern human skulls will show considerable variation of shape and brain size. The BBC reported recently that Neanderthal man had been found to use make-up. Tools have been found with the earliest remains of humans. It appears that they were not really so different from us after all.

'You did it yourself in nine months' is a silly chapter to include in a book purporting to give the evidence for evolution. The

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Right: Gorilla: where is the evolutionary link?



development from the tiny embryo to a baby proves nothing with regard to the evolution of single cell bacteria into humans. To include such a chapter simply shows how weak the arguments are.

Maps and Homology

I am quite happy to accept that the ancient world looked different from today and would argue that there must have been land bridges between the continents. Scorn is poured on the idea of animals moving out from the ark across the world. Imagine a kangaroo hopping all the way to Australia! But Dawkins himself argues for the origin of man being in Africa and then spreading out to Australia. I see no problem with a family of kangaroos making it to Australia in, for example, a century or two.

I find no problem with homology – this is the idea that various animals have the same basic structure, eg a head and four limbs. To me it speaks of one Creator rather than a common origin. One basic plan is used and that is developed in many ways. With the infinite variety of possible mutations which the evolutionists claim why do we not have three-legged and five-legged animals? Why do we not have animals with wheels rather than legs as on certain terrain they could move very much faster and more efficiently? All men and animals are related in having bodies. What distinguishes man from the animals is the soul which is created in the image of God.

History written all over us

In his chapter, 'History written all over us', Dawkins argues that ostriches are obviously descended from birds which used to fly. He asserts that because of this no serious observer could doubt the truth of evolution. For my own part I cannot see why even an evolutionist would have to believe that ostriches or their predecessors originally flew. Why should some birds not develop into flying birds and others into fast running ones? For my own part I find it hard to imagine why natural selection would take the power to fly from certain creatures. Surely flying is a great way of escape from predators and an excellent way to find food. Dawkins is so enamoured with his own theories that he fails to be self-critical. In a section on 'Unintelligent design' he argues that 'God' didn't make a very good job of some of His design work. The eye is described as a kind of patch-up job. What amazing arrogance! Let him or his friends produce a better eye and fit it into the eye sockets of the many blind people in the world and then maybe he will have a right to talk. The reason behind certain structures is questioned. They may appear useless to us with our limited knowledge but in years to come after diligent research I have no doubt but that the reasons will be discovered for the way we are made. For example the tonsils and the appendix might seem to us useless organs but modern surgeons are not as keen as in the past to remove them, reckoning that they do have a purpose.

Arms race

In his penultimate chapter Dawkins deals with what he describes as the wastefulness of the 'arms race'. The trees of the forest have to climb ever higher to get light – but then that provides man with timber. The cheetah and the gazelle must

run ever faster to survive. Here we see nature 'red in tooth and claw'. The Bible speaks of the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:19-23). There is pain and suffering in the world because of the sin and fall of man. We live in a cursed world where death reigns. But we look for Christ to come again and bring in a new heavens and a new earth where there is no death and suffering and the lion shall lie down with the lamb. Dawkins concludes as we would expect, 'Natural selection is all futile. It is about the survival of self-replicating instructions for self-replication'. How sad! He has dug himself into a hole where everything is meaningless, while at the same time his human conscience and awareness of himself as a creature made in the image of God is telling him that there is meaning to life.

The last chapter tries to give a more positive spin. He ends: 'We are surrounded by endless forms, most beautiful and wonderful, and it is no accident, but the direct consequence of evolution by non-random natural selection – the only game in town, the greatest show on Earth'. Naturally we see it quite differently. It is all made by God and to this amazing God we give the glory.

Problems with Evolution

For me after reading this book there remain catastrophic problems for evolution to explain.

1. The first great problem is how to explain the origin of life in the beginning. Dawkins notes the difficulty. He weakly attempts to argue that perhaps life began with RNA, rather than DNA and proteins. He talks bravely of what he believes chemists will be able to do in the next few decades to simulate the beginning of life. Despite all the advances of science, chemists so far have made no progress in that direction. Yet a chance reaction in a warm puddle or on the ocean floor is supposed to have produced the immensely complicated self-replicating RNA from which living cells were supposed initially to have been formed.

2. A second related problem is that even if living cells had come into existence, how could they survive and what would they feed on? Obviously they could not feed on plants as there could not be plants, which are themselves very complicated living organisms.

3. Dawkins sees evolution progressing through tiny mutations. Now it may be possible to envisage a leg growing longer or thicker by this means but how could fish dependent on gills change into mammals dependent on lungs, how could a heart with three chambers change into a heart with four? Spread it over millions of years and explain how by tiny changes the blood-flow system of cold-blooded animals changes to that of warm-blooded animals, how could feathers begin to grow, how could eyes form? These and a thousand more transitions cannot be done by small mutations but by drastic changes.

For these and many other reasons I find it much easier and more reasonable to believe that God created it all, just as the Bible tells me. Dawkins' overwhelming evidence when it is boiled down is actually rather weak.

Attempting to Unlock the Door

As long as men are given to stealing, safes and locks will be needed. The harder they are to unlock, the better. Yet a strange thing happened a short time ago. A notorious thief was caught with a bunch of keys, fifty-six of them, trying to unlock a door. How many of the keys he had tried, or how long he had been trying to unlock the door, we do not know. A watchman, however, caught him at it and handed him over to the police. He was fined for malicious trespass. BUT – he might have tried all day and all night, and for the rest of his life, to unlock that door. He could never have succeeded in his purpose for the simple reason that it was already UNLOCKED. All he had to do was to turn the handle and walk in.

This reminds us, however, of a mistake made by hundreds of thousands, no, millions of honest people; a mistake which is absolutely fatal, not only for time but for eternity, not only for the body but for the soul. We refer to the matter of the soul's salvation. If men only realized the seriousness of sin and their lost estate before God, how anxious they would be to enter the door of salvation! Indeed, many are anxious but they make the serious mistake of thinking the door is locked, and that they must find the key to unlock it.

Many keep scratching at the door of salvation with the key of good works. They think this will unlock the door, and ensure their reaching heaven at last. But good works can never earn heaven. The Bible is plain on that point. We read that salvation is 'not of works, lest any man should boast' (Ephesians 2:9). The door is already unlocked. Who unlocked it? The Saviour

cried, 'I am the door: BY ME if any man enter in, he shall be saved' (John 10:9). He did the work of salvation at the cross. He cried, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). The work is DONE.

Some are trying to open the door of salvation with

the key of money. Was that not what Luther fought against when a friar was selling indulgences, and telling the people that at the instant their money clinked at the bottom of his alms-box the soul of their dead relative would be released from purgatory and ascend to heaven? Money cannot buy salvation. Not all the money in the world can wipe away one sin, while 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from ALL sin' (1 John 1:7). All keys are useless in opening an unlocked door. The door to life eternal swings wide when approached by simple faith in the Saviour. We read that 'the GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6:23). You cannot buy a gift. You cannot earn it. Why not simply accept it? Walk through that open door? Why not do so NOW?



Welcome to Modern Britain?

Rev John Keddie

One headline in my newspaper recently was quite striking for a leading editorial: 'No respect, no morals, no trust – welcome to modern Britain.' Britain? What is Britain? No doubt it was thought in the past that Britain was a place where there was respect for life, manners, courtesy, Christian values. However true that might have been in the past, sadly there has been a near-complete demolition of Britain (we can't call it 'Great' any more) as a remotely-'Christian' nation. It hasn't been helped by the 'implosion' in the mainline Churches. What do they

really believe any more? Someone engineered huge – and confusing – social change through promoting a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic agenda, hand-in-hand with the promotion of a secular state.

No Moral Standards

This raises huge questions. What is 'respect'? Where do you get morals from? How do you really get trust? Especially, how do you get these things with a commitment to a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and secular social structure involving



'No respect... no morals... no trust.'

such varied and disparate views of what constitutes morality? I mean, there are huge tracts of modern Britain where people live out their lives committed to no absolute standards. Traditionally, absolute standards were seen to be found in the Judeo-Christian outlook. But that is not politically correct in our diversified society.

God's Standards

So, it's all very well to bemoan no respect and no morals and no trust, but re-establishing such things will frankly depend upon a recovery of the Ten Commandments and the other 'absolute' (dare I use the word?) principles found in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It will require a recovery in the churches of confidence in their Scriptures and a fearless application of them (something conspicuous by its absence in recent times). It will require a recovery of belief in Christ as the One who is 'the way, the truth, and the

life' (John 14:6) and the only Saviour. Furthermore, it will require an acknowledgement by the powers that be of His Headship over the nations (Ephesians 1:22) and His Word as their rule.

Freedom is Lost

Modern Britain is in an extremely poor state in terms of respect, morality and trust. There is an appropriate word from Isaiah for our times – a remedy for our moral and spiritual malaise – the only one: 'Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is His treasure' (33:6). As another commentator wrote in the press recently: 'Parliamentary reform and financial re-regulation will treat the symptoms, not the cause ... Either we recover the moral sense or we will find too late, that in the name of liberty, we have lost our freedom.' We must earnestly seek the Lord.



A Journey from Cynicism to Faith

Joachim Parker

I begin my story at a closed wooden doorway. It was the entrance to a tiny hilltop monastery in Italy. I had been working as the sole representative for a small British tourist company and was based in an isolated northern region for some months and had been growing weary of the work. It consisted of meeting, greeting, and briefing my clients arriving from the UK for walking and cycling holidays and then dropping them back off at the station ten days later before picking up new guests again in the evening. Every two days I did this and between times I maintained bikes, moved bags and booked hotels. There were no days off for reps, but that afternoon I made time to explore an alternative tourist attraction, a hilltop hermitage with panoramic views. But the door was closed and no one was answering the bell. I read the inscription in white marble beside the door: 'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul' (Mark 8:36).

Mediterranean dream

I was at the heart of a dream that so many of our guests were living and saving for all year round: an expensive holiday, Mediterranean climate, Italian food and wine, charming

hotels, beautiful, peaceful scenery, fine art and culture. I ate and drank the homemade food and local wine in the family restaurant for free; I lived in a brand new apartment; I drove a fine vehicle, and the company paid all my expenses – and then put wages into my bank. Life was supposed to be good. Life couldn't get much better. Yet the words of the Scripture on the marble plaque illuminated the experience in my heart: emptiness – a barren sense of futility from which I had fled before. I was not able to successfully suppress it. In the attempt to do so I stumbled into many foolish and senseless ways. On one occasion I cried out to God in my misery. Perhaps you will have heard the expression 'Vanity of vanities ... all is vanity' (Ecclesiastes 1:2). I knew then these words to be true. All my experiences were passing and nothing satisfied. What is your answer to this question, 'What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun' (v3)?

Wales and TV

A few months later, I was visiting a friend in rural Wales. I kept myself busy refurbishing part of his house. My friend disappeared for a couple of days to visit his girlfriend. I put

the TV on to keep myself company while I worked and I explored the new satellite box he had acquired. Beyond the varieties of shopping channels I found three stations of 'God Channel'. I assumed there would be as much fast selling here as on the other commercial stations. Nevertheless I was attracted to listen, especially to one preacher who came on late at night. The next day I looked forward to hearing him again, but with some trepidation as well as anticipation.

The preacher spoke with much passion. He painted a dark and dreadful picture of Jesus standing trial before Pilate prior to the crucifixion. It was a dark scene because, as anyone who has heard of Jesus knows, he was condemned to a most horrible death in this trial. The scene was dreadful because Pilate's questioning revealed Jesus not only to be innocent of any crime – but also to be King of another world. Pilate's questions rose in a spiral pointing to only one conclusion: 'Am I a Jew? ...What hast thou done? ... Art thou a king then? ...What is truth? ...I find in him no fault at all' (John 18.35-38).

Who is Jesus?

The preacher pressed the questions which Pilate had asked of Jesus on us who were listening. "Who do you say Jesus is? Is Jesus a criminal? Is He a liar? Is He guilty? Then, if none of these, who is He? Who? Have you gone through life up till now, as I had, without asking these pointed questions Pilate asked? Ask now! Who is Jesus? Who does He claim to be? What is your verdict on Jesus at His trial? What judgment have you passed on Jesus?"

Called by the preacher to accept Jesus' title and right as Lord and King of Heaven and Earth, and not only Lord and King but Saviour, who bore the sin of guilty ones in their stead, and gave His life on the cross for them, I came, confessing my sin and my proud unbelief, and was humbled before Him.

Peace

I knew that night that I would be judged a fool for coming by any worldly observer. Kneeling and weeping before a TV screen listening to the words of an American evangelist! 'You must have lost your mind!' The next day, while I continued to work, I left the channel on listening for the Scriptures read out and for worship sung to the Lord. Later, my friend returned. On entering his house he heard the TV, then looked at me, and said, 'You can turn that off, or get out!' A lurch within me confirmed that my spiritual encounter was no ethereal matter. Jesus was not welcome in this house! The following day, with TV off, I found a Bible my friend was given as a boy. From it, while finishing the refurbishment work, I rehearsed the twenty third Psalm, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want', till I had it by heart. The next day I went on my way with no Bible and no TV, but with the knowledge of the Lord in my heart and His Word on my lips.

That was in 2001. Since then, by his power the Lord has kept me believing in Him and has provided for my every need. Often I have failed Him yet He has never failed me. Will you follow him?

I was at the heart of a dream that so many of our guests were living and saving for all year round: an expensive holiday, Mediterranean climate, Italian food and wine... Life was supposed to be good. Life couldn't get much better. Yet ... emptiness – a barren sense of futility...'



Is there any Hope for Big Sinners?

Rev Greg MacDonald

Cain and Abel were the first children born into the world. These brothers are famous largely because Cain killed his brother. They had both offered sacrifices to God, and while God was pleased with Abel's offering of a lamb, he did not accept Cain's offering of his crops. In jealousy and bitterness Cain killed his brother – the first murder.

Cain doesn't have many redeeming features. He is petulant, malicious, deceitful and selfish. Nor did his life have a happy ending. Scripture records no later conversion. His offspring continued in the godless footsteps of their forefather. Not much hope for Cain!

Now here is our question: How does the Gospel deal with such hopeless cases? Sometimes people today conclude that they are beyond the Gospel, outwith hope. Let's look at Cain, and particularly at the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it was set before Cain and Abel, in the first seven verses of Genesis chapter 4.

Gospel timing

Cain had just failed the most important religious test of his life. He had completely blown it. God rejected his offering. His religion was in ruins. His religion itself was sinful.

Remember this was just after the Fall. God was already moved with anger for man's sin. Now Cain chooses to come to God on his own terms (that was the problem with his grain offering). God was angry and He was right to be angry. Who could put a timeframe on how long it would be before God would turn from the fierceness of His anger, and be ready to show mercy?

Yet God comes right away with the Gospel to Cain. In verse 5 Cain's religion fails him, and in v7 God is straight in there: 'If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?'

When you sin, Satan loves to say: 'You cannot go to God yet. Not when you were sinning so much so recently. Not when the sin is still so fresh in the memory. It is still too soon to go to God, too soon to expect any mercy, any pity, any Gospel!'

Learn from Cain. The Gospel came straight after his sin.

Gospel promise

What can the Gospel add to your life? Many of you reading this article live your life every day unsaved. Yet you seem

happy. You smile. You enjoy your life. You get up in the morning and go about your business, much like your Christian neighbour. So what is it that the Gospel would bring to your life? What promise does it carry as its greatest treasure?

It carries the promise of acceptance – acceptance with God. This is what Paul preached all round the Roman Empire – that God commanded sinners to be reconciled to Him. The Gospel is a way of peace, a promise of acceptance with God. Surely you know that this would change your life? What was already Abel's experience (v4), came to Cain as a promise (v7a).

Gospel audience

But if we hold the focus a little longer on v7, we can ask – to whom is the Gospel directed? Sometimes an advert on TV or in the paper completely mystifies you. You cannot fathom it. But maybe someone much younger sees that advert and it makes perfect sense to them. The advert was targeted. It had a specific audience in mind.

So what is the target audience of the Gospel? Is it Cain or Abel?

Let's deal first with Abel. Abel, we know, offered his sacrifice in faith (Hebrews 11:4). The Gospel worked faith in him. He trusted himself to the sacrifice, as a picture of the coming Saviour. He was certainly in the Gospel audience and believed.

Yet what of Cain? Cain was a wretched sinner. He was empty of true faith. He was bitter, malicious and violently moody. Yet his sin didn't carry him outside the fence of Gospel! Take note of the Gospel given to Cain, you who despair! Notice Cain, adulterous sinner! Notice Cain, cheat and liar! Man of anger, have you seen Cain?

Great sin does not unfit you for the Gospel. Nor does the Gospel hold back from you because of your sin. Christ Jesus assures you that he came 'not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Luke 5:32).

Now we can even go further. Have you ever been driven to think of yourself as non-elect, reprobate, as having sinned the unforgivable sin? 'God', you thought, 'would not bring his Gospel to me. When I hear its promise of peace, I have no confidence that it is for me at all. I hear it well enough. I

'Cain was a wretched sinner. He was empty of true faith. He was bitter, malicious and violently moody. Yet his sin didn't carry him outside the fence of Gospel!'

could wish it sounded for me, but I cannot believe it does. God would not call me. God would not offer me mercy.' But look here. The preacher in our verse is God himself, directly. He is preaching the Gospel to Cain. To Cain – the wicked Cain! But more – to Cain, the reprobate! And what did God say to Cain the reprobate? He made the very same Gospel promise – he promised him acceptance.

Gospel condition

Now God did not promise Cain unconditionally. The Gospel has a great condition. The condition is faith.

Even then it was faith. Abel offered by faith and was accepted. God is ready to accept Cain, even after his earlier religious failures, if he will offer a good offering; if he will offer in faith; if he will trust to the sacrifice that God is going to provide; if he will look to Christ. This is the great, the

only, Gospel condition. As long as you refuse to believe you cannot be saved. There is no safety for a faithless man. This is true! God even came to wicked Cain, reprobate Cain, with the very same Gospel terms, hanging upon the very same Gospel condition.

Do you see the importance of this? It means that, whoever reads this, the Gospel faces you. It calls you. It proclaims the message of peace to you. It promises that God will accept you. Its sole condition is that you must trust yourself to Christ, to His sacrifice.

Look at Cain and Abel. It all hangs on their sacrifice. Unless you have an acceptable sacrifice, your person cannot be acceptable to God.

Is Christ your sacrifice? Take Christ. Believe upon His name. Cry out for mercy in His name and you will be saved. Do not end like Cain.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, is shown from the chest up. She is looking off to the side with a thoughtful or slightly distressed expression. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

'The Gospel is a way of peace, a promise of acceptance with God. Surely you know that this would change your life?'

The Precious Saviour

Rev David Blunt (North Uist)

It is only too apparent that all is not well with the world which God made. It may be humbling for us to admit it but the real problem is with man himself. When God created Adam and placed him in paradise he was pure in heart and loved his Lord. God set him a test: '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' (Genesis 2:16,17). Tragically, Adam disobeyed this command, sinning against God. As the head of our race Adam represented us all, so that when he sinned we sinned too: 'by one man's disobedience many were made sinners' (Romans 5:19). What does this mean?

Plight

It means that we are all unrighteous. Because our mind, will and affections are now opposed to God and devoted to sin we are 'filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness' – and much more besides (Romans 1:29-31).

It means that we are all corrupt. When we view the human race we see that 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23). This bias towards evil is present from our infancy. When David repented of his adultery he admitted, 'I was shapen in iniquity' (Psalm 51:5). Our wicked deeds all spring from the polluted fountain of our corrupt nature.

It means that we are all guilty. We have broken God's law and are liable to its penalty. It is a serious thing to break the law of the land and to be faced with a fine or jail. It is far, far more serious to disobey God's law, to contract a debt we cannot pay and to be in danger of eternal punishment in hell!

Our sin leads to misery. However happy we may appear to be with our lot the reality is that as sinners we are in a state of condemnation and wrath. 'He that believeth not is condemned already ... the wrath of God abideth on him' (John 3:18,36). By our sin we have lost our likeness to God and our friendship with God. We are spiritually dead and heading rapidly to everlasting destruction. Is there any help at hand?

Saviour

Our plight being what it is only God can provide a remedy. And He has! In His love to sinners God has sent a Saviour

into the world. He sent His own eternal Son, Jesus Christ, for there was none other suitable or able to save sinners.

To perform the work of salvation God's dear Son became man in the womb of the virgin Mary. Before her child was born the angel said to Joseph her husband: 'Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). This is the good news! 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law' (Galatians 4:4,5).

Death

To redeem means to purchase or buy back what is captive. We are in slavery to sin, the world and the devil and a holy and just God requires a ransom for our deliverance. It was necessary that the Saviour should be man to enable Him to obey God's law and suffer its penalty on behalf of sinners. It was necessary too that the Saviour should be God in order that His obedience and suffering might be of sufficient value to save a countless number from their sins.

Jesus lived a perfect life without sin and died on the cross, shedding His own precious blood. We must understand that God punished His Son in the place of sinners. He was 'once offered to bear the sins of many' (Hebrews 9:28). Just before Jesus died He said, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). His sacrifice was complete. The proof is that 'he rose again the third day' (1 Corinthians 15:4). By His death Jesus Christ has satisfied God's justice and put away all the sins of His people. He has removed the enmity between God and men and opened up the way for us to be restored to God.

Salvation

How are we to benefit from what Christ has done? Salvation is all of God's grace! Recognise that you need a new heart, for Jesus said, 'Ye must be born again' (John 3:7). Freely confess your sin to God and ask His forgiveness, praying 'God be merciful to me a sinner' (Luke 18:13). Put your trust in Jesus the Saviour for righteousness. Go to God just as you are, resting on Christ, and you will be accepted. You will become a child of God and an heir of heaven. The sure promise of Christ is: 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37).



'We are all guilty. We have broken God's law and are liable to its penalty.'

The Belknap Disaster

Right: *USS Belknap*



One after another the F-14 fighters braced on the catapults, revved their engines to a screech and were flung off the bow of the 87,000-ton carrier John F Kennedy which was steaming through the Ionian Sea about 70 miles off the coast of Sicily. It was a routine manoeuvre. The U S Sixth Fleet was operating in the area, and aboard the Belknap, a guided-missile cruiser which was following the Kennedy, all was quiet. 'Taps' had sounded and the men were settling into bed or beginning a quiet game. After all, they were on a U S ship surrounded by other U S ships in a non-combat zone. What could possibly go wrong?

Perhaps this describes your life. There are many things in this life which can lull us into a false sense of security. You may feel secure and comfortable in your home, in your job, or with your friends, or with your own abilities, or even with your religion. The Bible tells of one who was caught up in his accomplishments and had great plans for his future down here on earth, but he never gave a thought to eternity. God said to him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee' (Luke 12:20).

The Kennedy radioed orders to the Belknap to go to 'plane guard position', a position just behind the aircraft carrier. If an accident occurs and a plane goes into the water, the ship behind the carrier can quickly recover the pilot. So the Belknap began to turn. At the same time, the Kennedy began to turn into the wind so that the planes could more easily land on her deck. When both ships finished their turns they were headed, not in the same direction with the Belknap following, but toward each other. The Kennedy's flight deck sticks out 75 feet above the water. Like a huge knife it cut through the Belknap's stacks. The Belknap cut through aircraft refuelling lines that were hanging down from the Kennedy's flight deck, and jet fuel poured out over the entire length of the Belknap. The fuel also poured down the stacks and right into the great boilers that powered the ship. In the terrible explosions that followed, six men on the Belknap and one on the Kennedy lost their lives, 25 men were wounded and 55 men went overboard.

There were warning signs that would have saved them from disaster if they had heeded them. For instance, there are red and green running lights which indicate which side of the ship

is starboard (right) and which is port (left). For some reason, warning signs like these were either misread or ignored. God has given you and me some warning signs. He tells us clearly in His Word that we are on a course to destruction! 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it' (Matthew 7:13-14). 'There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. Destruction and misery are in their ways' (Romans 3:10,11,16). Our old enemy, Satan, would have us working our way to heaven or believing that somewhere inside we are good enough to enter heaven. But God warns us that we are lost sinners, every one of us, and that we can never be good enough to earn heaven! Romans 3:23 says, 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' and Isaiah 64:6 reminds us that 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses [our good works] are as filthy rags.'

The Belknap lost all power and was helpless. Other ships like the guided-missile cruiser Ricketts made valiant attempts to help. They were all limited as to what they could do. But God is not limited. In His love He has provided a way by which we can be saved! John 3:16 tells us that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'. Jesus Christ bore the terrible punishment for sin on the cross so that He, in His great love, could offer you a free pardon. When you receive Him as your own personal Saviour, His shed blood will wash you clean from all sin (1 John 1:7). Damage to the Kennedy was slight, and they were back in operation in about twenty minutes. However, the Belknap was so badly damaged that it had to be towed back to Philadelphia and be completely rebuilt. We are happy that every one of the 55 men who went overboard was saved from those fiery waters. How about you? Have you heeded the warning signs that you are heading on a collision course with everlasting destruction? Will you look to Him who alone is able to save you?

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“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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned.”

John 3:16-18