

AFTERWORD

You are now, having read this not-so-little book, the recipient of vital information which should stimulate some new perspectives. What will you do with it?

You can scoff as Peter said so many would (2 Peter 3:3-7)¹ and refuse to give it any more thought. You can forget about it and go on with life as usual, pursuing your own ambitions, caught up in the worries and cares of this life. Or you can take it seriously and begin your own process of exploration and discovery. We urge you to do the latter. Ask God to reveal the truth to you. He is happy to oblige serious inquirers.

HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN

Most people I talk with about spiritual things have one thing in common: they all believe that heaven exists and that you get there by being good. Plain and simple. I like to share an illustration with them. It goes like this:

Suppose it were true that one gets to heaven by being good or at least by not being too bad, in one's own estimation. If that were the case, we would have, for the sake of illustration, a scene something like this:

When you die, you go *somewhere* up there, wherever God is. And your life is reviewed. God, knowing everything about you and having recorded every second of your life, every thought, every deed, every failure, every hidden motive, every kindness, piles all your rightly motivated deeds on the right side of the scale (taking into consideration your attitude, intentions, handicaps, challenges, wounds, deficits, etc.) and all your wrongly motivated deeds on the left side of the scale.² Then depending on which way the scale tips, He assigns you to either the good place or the bad place.

¹ "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men."

² Really bad sins such as murder and adultery would weigh more than small sins such as white lies and petty theft. Keep in mind, however, that Jesus did not see it quite this way. He said if you lust after a woman in your heart, you have as much as committed adultery with her. See Matthew 5.

Now imagine that it's the final judgment and God is doing that with everyone. All the books are opened and everyone's life is looked at. God then places the best person who ever lived on His right, perhaps a Mother-Teresa type. Next, He places the worst person who ever lived, maybe someone like Hitler, on His left. Then, in between, He lines up everyone else from worst to best. Imagine that these lines are people. Billions of people.



Now, where will God divide the line, sending those on His left to hell and those on His right to heaven? At the tipping point, right? At some point along this continuum there will be a point where everyone to the left did more things wrong than right, and their scales tipped to the left. They are what we think of as the “bad” people. And to the right of that tipping point would be the not-so-bad and the basically “good people,” who did more good deeds than bad.³ And this method of judgment kind of makes sense to our logical minds, until you realize one teensy little problem.



The persons immediately on either side of this vertical line (the tipping point) are almost identical on the scale of good and evil, aren't they? They are, after all, right next to each other on the continuum. And neither of them are anything to write home about either. They're both way down at the tipping point, which means they did as much bad stuff as they did good. The difference? The person on the left of the line has maybe one more little white lie than the person on the right, and that one extra bad deed caused their scale to tip to the left. In essence, then, they go to hell for that one extra lie, because, had they not committed it, they'd be on the other side of the line. And the other person

³ Someone might say, what about those people whose scales are exactly balanced? Though we agree this might be a possibility under this scenario, chances are very high that you are not one of them. So I wouldn't spend too much time worrying about that eventuality. This is only an illustration, after all, to explain an untenable concept. The entire argument is an illusion that we humans comfort ourselves with. “Well, at least I'm better than so-and-so,” or “I'm basically a good person. I mean I've never murdered anyone or anything.” Neither of which qualifies one for heaven.

goes to heaven for that one extra *good* deed, despite all their bad deeds, because if they hadn't performed it, they'd be on the other side of the line, too.

Well how fair is that?

If you said it's *not* fair, you'd be right. Number one, you have no control over where the tipping-point is. You cannot even keep an accurate tally of your own bad vs. good deeds (from God's viewpoint) to make sure you're still on the "good side" of the line. You can only guess from your own limited and flawed perspective of good and evil and the motives of your own heart. And number two, how can it be fair to send one person to hell when they are almost identical to the person right next to them who gets to go to heaven? What a rip! And no matter where you put the line, you run into the same problem. Slide it anywhere along the continuum and you still have a line between two very similar individuals. (And purgatory only complicates the issue, requiring two lines.⁴)

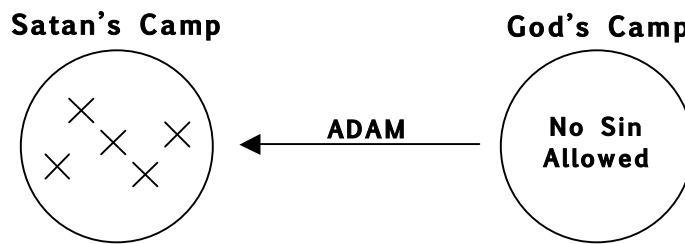
And to make matters worse, how would God maintain the perfection of His heaven in this case, since the individual going there is no great shakes either? Heaven would soon be full of strife and misery, just like earth. This method of judgment just doesn't work for a righteous God who wants to insure there is peace in His home forever.

Here's another illustration that might be helpful:

When Adam was created he was "the god of this world" so to speak. He was given dominion over the entire creation. (You can read about this in Genesis 2.) Satan, who was already fallen at that point, was not ruler of anything except his own followers. He was out of the loop as far as Earth was concerned. But he was smart enough to know that, if he could get back *into* the loop, by interjecting himself somehow into the creation itself as one of its creatures, and then get Adam to submit to that creature—to one *under* Adam's own dominion—Satan could wrest control of this world back from man, and at the same time, make mankind his

⁴ And purgatory does not solve the problem either. Now you have two lines. The people in the middle go to purgatory and the people on either side go to heaven or hell. But now you have *two* places where the line divides two almost identical people. You've only compounded the problem.

slaves.⁵ Scripture says we “are slaves of the one we obey,”⁶ and since Adam obeyed Satan in the guise of the serpent (the cleverest of the beasts of the field and thus the “representative of the animal order), he became Satan’s slave and in essence, a slave of the created order as well.⁷ And since God could not allow a rebellious individual to live in His perfect Garden, nor did He want Adam to eat from the tree of life and live forever in his fallen condition, God evicted him, and Adam moved from the camp of God to the camp of Satan. Satan became his master, and “the god of this world”⁸ in his place. Adam and Eve then began having children in the slave camp, and their children had children, all automatically property of the slave master. So now Satan rules over the earth and all its inhabitants. We automatically become his slaves at birth. He owns us.



Slaves are the lowest of the low. They have no rights. They have no hope. They have no money. They cannot buy themselves out of the slave-holder’s camp. Their only hope is to be purchased by a benevolent benefactor, someone who can “redeem” them from the slaveholder’s tyranny and abuse.

This is exactly what Jesus, our “kinsman redeemer,” did for us. God went to Satan and asked him to name his price for the whole lot of us. In essence at that point, Satan was our “father” and could determine our worth. God wanted to purchase us as His own Bride, who would be invited to live in His perfect home

⁵ Ask yourself why Satan entered the serpent, the cleverest of the beasts of the field, instead of appearing as an “angel of light,” which Scripture tells us he is capable of doing. One, it would have made the test extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, for an “innocent,” untested person to pass, and two, it would not have given Satan legal dominion over the creation. Creation itself had to fall under his authority as well as man. Since Adam was the highest of the created realm, his sin became our sin by proxy. And since the serpent was the cleverest of the beasts of the field, his sin became the earth’s sin by proxy.

⁶ “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” Romans 6:16

⁷ Man is constantly having to fight against this world to make his way through it. The natural world (thorns, thistles, floods, storms, drought, etc.) as well as the proclivities of other humans, one’s own appetites that threaten to dominate, and the demonic realm.

⁸ “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” 2 Cor. 4:3-4

forever. The Bride Price that Satan named was the blood of God's only begotten Son. "I want You dead! That's my price!" God, because of His great love for His creation, was willing to pay the freight. He came to earth as an unfallen man,⁹ the Second Adam, lived a perfect life and paid the supreme price in His own blood to purchase us from Satan's camp: from the very jaws of sin, death and hell. In effect, He went to the electric chair for us. In our place. Now, if we are willing to make God our new Lord and Master, our heavenly Husband and perfect Provider, we can be brought out of the kingdom of darkness on the basis of His payment and transferred back into the kingdom of light, God's Garden, where we will live forever feasting on the real Tree of Life. By allowing that transaction to take place in our hearts and in our relationship with God (receiving the free gift of God's payment for our sins through faith and heartfelt repentance, and submitting to His Lordship), we can rejoin His family as His Beloved Bride.

Just as the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt (symbolic of sin) when they trusted Moses and followed him (a type of Christ), we can become escapees from the slave camp of Satan when we believe Jesus and receive His payment for our sins and follow *Him*. As God's people, the Israelites were given living water (a type of the Holy Spirit) from a Rock (a picture of Christ) in the desert (symbolic of this world), and fed daily with bread from heaven, called manna, which also symbolized Jesus, the Bread of Life.¹⁰ We can have these same benefits by trusting in Jesus here and now. We can have the spiritual benefits of the true Living Water, and our daily Bread, which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And we can join Him in His kingdom when we die.

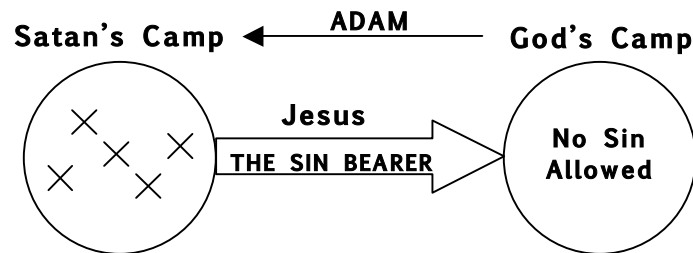
No sin was allowed in the camp of God, a picture of heaven, so it stands to reason that we cannot get into heaven with our sin either. Even one teensy little sin, lest we ruin it. But we all have them.

The only way we can get into God's camp and stay there is to offload our sin first. But how do we do that?

⁹ Jesus, however, was not born into Satan's slave camp because he did not have a human father. His Father was God. Original sin is passed through the human father only (because the Scriptures tell us that Adam sinned deliberately, whereas Eve was deceived). So Jesus, like Adam at his creation, was not a slave of sin. Adam failed to remain so. Jesus did not.

¹⁰ "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." 1 Corinthians 10:10-12

There is only one way. Jesus is the sin-bearer. He and He alone came to earth and paid the penalty for our sins. No other religion offers a savior. No other religion even claims to pay for our sin. They all have programs for working one's *own* way to heaven, but none has a bona-fide solution to the sin problem. They are all based on works. But we cannot work our way to heaven. We cannot be perfect, and that is what heaven requires.



The fact is, though our deeds are important as indicators of our heart condition and our attitude toward God and His law, they cannot be the basis on which we get into heaven. For one thing, heaven is perfect and we aren't. All sin is rebellion and idolatry. It's simply putting our own wishes and desires and feelings ahead of God and His standards and requirements. No matter what it looks like, hidden or heinous, sin is sin. And Jesus told us, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." In other words, if we love Him and appreciate what He did for us, we'll do our darndest to find out what pleases Him and do it. Because bottom line, we owe Him our lives.

The amazing thing is that God, while we were still in the slave camp completely oblivious to His desire to set us free, went out of His way to make provision for our release. He planned a way to pay for our sins, so that we could, one day, get out of the devil's camp and get into heaven without our sin.

How did He pay for them? By dying on the cross in your place, and mine. We should have been the ones hanging up there for all the rotten thoughts, deeds, attitudes, words and failures we've committed. We deserve to die for the things we've done.

In actual fact, someone *has to* die for our sins if we're going to be admitted to heaven. God has to require that or He is not righteous. Wrong must be righted. And justice has to be completely satisfied before sin can

be expunged from our record. If He just lets us off scot-free, the people we wounded would never feel that justice had been served and they would blame God for that. And they'd be right to do so.

But, the good news is, our sin *has* been paid for and we have the option of accessing that payment for our own rebellious deeds, but only through faith in Jesus and His finished work of redemption.

We *can* choose to pay for it ourselves, of course. Unfortunately, if we elect this option, we remain in the devil's camp, as one of his kids, because there are only two choices: the Fatherhood of God, or the fatherhood of Satan. You can only have one master. Remember, Satan took the title deed to the human race when Adam sinned. And we are all born under his authority and ownership. If we want to transfer out of his family, it takes an act of God, literally. God buys us out of Satan's family with His own blood.

Heaven is God's home and He's not going to let it be overrun by hoodlums and liars. He doesn't have to, and He'd be a fool if He did. God is no less astute than we are. Few of us would take a blatant, unrepentant or unreformed criminal into our homes, especially if we have children or other loved ones living there. Nor *should* we. And neither will He.

How do you get rid of your sin? Cast it onto Christ, repent sincerely and let Him pay for it. That is the only option you have. Otherwise you keep it and you live with Satan in *his* house, forever. It's hardly perfect so you won't ruin it. Far from it. There aren't words to describe how bad it is. And he doesn't care how nasty it gets either.

Some of you will find this convincing and will want to know what the next step is.

Here is what the Bible teaches us to do:

- 1) RECEIVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: Announce our belief in the one true Lord Jesus Christ¹¹ and our dependence on His sacrifice; and surrender our heart, mind, will, emotions, possessions, talents, finances, family and future to His Lordship;
- 2) REPENT OF OUR SINS: Repent of our sins as thoroughly and specifically as possible, trusting in the Father to forgive our sins on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross;
- 3) BE BAPTIZED: Be baptized into the name of the one true Lord, Jesus Christ;
- 4) RECEIVE THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT: Invite the Holy Spirit to come in and "take full possession" of our cleansed hearts; and
- 5) WALK IN OBEDIENCE: Begin to live for God, seeing that we are purchased possessions and joint heirs with Christ. Our lives now belong to Him.

To start this process, we suggest praying the following prayer or a similar honest prayer in your own words, out loud,¹² preferably in front of another person who already believes (it will be far more real and meaningful). If you know a born-again Christian that you trust, call them and let them witness your declaration of faith. They will be honored to do so.

SAMPLE PRAYER

"Father God, I admit today that I have ignored You, scoffed at Your Word, disobeyed Your Laws, and at every turn have chosen to serve self above the one true God. I see now that I have made the biggest error one can possibly make in this life. I have been what the Bible calls a fool. I have thrown my life away for a mess of pottage. All of my goals, my striving to earn praises from men, and storing up treasure on earth have been a complete waste. One day soon I'm going to stand before you completely naked and without anything to commend me to You. I am filled with shame and regret. Please help me now to repent, to turn away from

¹¹ His virgin birth, full deity, vicarious suffering and atoning death, burial, bodily resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven. These are historical facts (not esoteric beliefs or unfounded claims), demonstrated by Jesus' own miracles and testified to by real people who lived in real towns, knew Him personally and later died for their testimony. Making the decision to believe these facts is simply a decision to accept history.

¹² This is important for a number of reasons: 1) it will be much more powerful in your own life if you hear yourself say the words aloud; 2) it will impact your heart much more deeply to hear yourself say these things; 3) the fallen world of demons needs to be put on notice that you are transferring your allegiance to God and are surrendering to His authority; 4) we are told in Scripture to confess with our mouth and believe in our hearts that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead; 5) having a witness creates a strong reference point for your life. When doubts come, you will be able to point back to this experience as the day you left Satan's camp.

my former way of life and my sins, to make a clean break and a new start. I want to live for You from here on out, to serve Your goals, and to obey Your Word. I want to ask You if You will please have mercy on me and grant me repentance, cleanse me of my sins by the blood of Jesus, and place me in Your Body where I can learn how to be more like You. Please help me to follow through, to commit myself wholly and unreservedly to You today. Please send a helper into my life and Your Holy Spirit into my heart to enable me to stand firm and to give me hope. I choose today to turn from sin and to follow You with my whole heart. Thank You for coming and dying for my sins. I know that without You and Your sacrifice I would have no hope of salvation. I give you complete permission, as Lord of my life, to do with me what You will. Amen.”

CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

Confessing our sins and renouncing our agreements with the fallen realm breaks the legal hold the devil has on us and allows God to “clean our house,” preparing our hearts as temples for the Holy Spirit. Ask God to show you all your past sins that He thinks need to be confessed. He will gladly accommodate this request. Sit down with paper and pencil and begin writing what He shows you. Go back as far as you can remember. Also write down on a separate page the lies you have been believing, about God, about sin, about yourself, about the world. Then follow the steps in Appendix B (see www.grace-n-truth.com/13theories) for repentance. This will do two things. It will remove the legal ground that Satan has gained through your sin and your agreements with him, through which he influences and entices you, and it will free you from shame, guilt and the condemnation of the enemy once you have made a thorough divestiture. Make restitution where possible. If you are wise, you will go through this process with a witness. Someone you trust to keep confidence (they should let you be the one to reveal your own sins to others if you choose) and someone who is not arrogant. Then get baptized and ask God to fill that vacated ground with His Holy Spirit. (Appendix B gives detailed instructions.) This is how one gets filled with the Spirit.

Next: Ask God to show you where He would like you to fellowship with other believers. He will lead you. (Forbid the devil to be involved in this process by the authority of Jesus Christ.) And two, start getting to know this God who loves you so much. Talk to Him as often as possible, about anything and everything. (You don't have to know how. There's no formula. Just be genuine.) Listen to Him. Listen to praise music. Sing along. (“God inhabits the praises of His people.”) Take time to be still before Him and let Him fill you

with His presence. He's always awake. Make Him your closest friend. Do not abandon Him or deny Him. There *is* a devil who would like nothing more than to return you to your former state. Don't let him. God will help you, but don't take Him for granted. Repent when you are convicted of sin. Obey immediately and without question when God shows you what displeases Him or what is sin. Cling to Him and He will escort you to your heavenly estate. It will cost you nothing, and yet everything. Count the cost today and throw in your lot with the King of Kings. It's a bargain. You will gain your soul in the process and lose nothing but dross.