

THE EXAMINER



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The Scheme of Redemption; The Power of the Gospel -

by Stan Cox - Part One

In our previous article, The Extension of God's Grace, we discussed the actions God took to secure man's redemption. At the close of that article we noted that Redemption is not universal. There are some who will not gain an entrance into heaven. This is clearly revealed in many places in scripture. One example is Jesus' statement to His disciples in **Matthew 25**. He said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left..." (**verses 31-33**). The Lord stated in verse 46 that "...these (those on the left) will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

As already noted in our refutation of Calvinism, God is not capricious. He does not arbitrarily

assign condemnation or reward at a whim. Concerning his eventual coming to earth, Peter said about the Lord, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (**2 Peter 3:9**). If God extended his Grace to all men, as indicated in this text as well as passages such as **John 3:16**, and not all men are going to taste heaven, it must be understood that salvation is conditional.

In fact, the passages above indicate within their context that salvation is conditional. In **Matthew 25** the separation of the sheep and goats was dependent upon their works. The sheep on the right hand were the ones who had been hospitable to strangers. Those condemned were in their state because they ignored the needs of those less fortunate. Too, Peter states in his passage that only those who repented would escape

perishing. Stated simply, God has done His part to secure our Redemption, and now man must do his part to secure it for himself. This is not to say that men can earn or merit their eternal safety. The debt of sin is too great, and our personal efforts too meager to earn our salvation. However, we can certainly secure for ourselves condemnation by our actions or lack thereof.

The next several articles will examine the part man plays in securing his own Redemption. The remainder of this article will serve as an overview.

The Power of the Gospel

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (**Romans 1:16**).

We have previously established the fundamental facts concerning Jesus' life. To recap:

- Jesus was born of a Virgin.
- Jesus was God on Earth.
- Jesus was tempted as we, making Him a perfect Mediator and High Priest on our behalf.
- Despite such temptations, Jesus did not sin.
- Jesus died on the cross, shedding His blood for our

sins.

- After three days in the grave, God raised Jesus from the dead.
- Jesus ascended into Heaven, exalted by God, reigning in His kingdom.
- His kingdom established, Jesus invites all into it through the call of the gospel.

These fundamental facts which affirm that Jesus is the Son of God, and our Redeemer, constitute the saving power of God to man. This is by God's design. "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (**1 Corinthians 1:21-24**).

God's word is indeed powerful. It is described in **Hebrews 4:12**, "For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The gospel "cut to the heart" the antagonists of

Stephen in **Acts 7 (verse 54)**, convicting them of the sin in their lives. This enraged them, and led them to stone Stephen to death. In **Acts chapter 2**, the Holy Spirit reveals that many Jews that day were "cut to the heart" as well (**verse 37**), this time leading to repentance and baptism for the "remission of sins." You may note that the word did the same thing in both instances. It pierced the hearts of men "even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow." You may also note that it produced two very different results. That is because the power of the gospel is persuasive. It can only produce repentance when it is heard by honest hearts seeking the truth. Stephen's tormentors were not interested in the truth, they simply wanted to protect their precious conventions. The Jews on Pentecost however were sincerely seeking forgiveness, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (**verse 37**).

**An Illustration of the Gospel:
The Parable of the Sower**

An illustration of what the power of the gospel can accomplish in men is seen in our Lord's parable, recorded in **Matthew 13:1-9**, and explained in **verses 18-23**. The constituent elements of the parable are the Sower (the one who preaches the word), the Seed (the word of God) and the various soils

(the hearts of men). You may notice in the parable that the only variables in the story are the hearts of men. The Sower is the same throughout, as is the Seed. So the different results produced can only be explained by the differences in men's hearts:

- ▶ **Wayside** - "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart" (**verse 19**).
- ▶ **Stony Places** - "he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (**verse 21**).
- ▶ **Among Thorns** - "hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" (**verse 22**).
- ▶ **Good Soil** - "hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (**verse 23**).

The only way the power of the gospel can bear fruit in the lives of those who hear it is if it falls on

good and honest hearts. The Apostle Paul preached the gospel in Thessalonica. His efforts are recorded in **Acts 17**, and his preaching persuaded some, as a "great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas." But, "...the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." In contrast to the ungodly actions of those in Thessalonica is the attitude of the Bereans in **verses 11 and 12**, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men." ---- **Concluded In Next Weeks**

Bulletin ----

BAPTISM - THEN WHAT?

ROM. 6:3-5

BAPTISM IS

- A BURIAL - COL. 2:12*
- IN WATER - ACTS 8:35-38*
- FOR ACCOUNTABLE BEINGS - MK. 16:15,16*
- UNTO REMISSION OF SINS - ACTS 2:38*
- FOR SALVATION - MK. 16:16; 1 PET. 3:21*
- TO GET INTO CHRIST - GAL. 3:27*
- TO BECOME NEW CREATURE - ROM. 6:3-5; 2 COR. 5:17*
- TO GET INTO THE ONE BODY - 1 COR. 12:13*

THEN

- WALK IN NEW LIFE - ROM. 6:4*
- STUDY & GROW - 2 TIM. 2:15; 2 PET. 3:18*
- A SERVANT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS - ROM. 6:17,18*
- KEEP SELF PURE - 1 TIM. 5:22*
- BE AN EXAMPLE - 1 TIM. 4:12*
- HAVE FAITH IN GOD - 1 PET. 1:18-21; 1 COR. 2:4,5; 1 COR. 1:18-29; PHIL. 1:15-18*
- FOLLOW JESUS - 1 PET. 2:21*
- PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST - MT. 6:33*
- RESIST TEMPTATION - JS. 1:13-15*
- BE FAITHFUL - REV. 2:10*
- BE FRUITFUL - MK. 16:15,16; JO. 15:1-6,16*

