

The Riches of Redemption

by
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“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:4-9).

WHAT is your most troublesome problem? Insecurity? Fear? Relating to people? Self-worth? Materialism? Sex? These are perplexing problems, but are they not surface symptoms of an underlying core problem?

Sin is the fundamental, root-cause of all human misery and discontent. It is the deep down disease which causes the irregularities and abnormalities of life. It is the cancer that produces the skin sores; it is the spider behind the web.

Fear, shame, and guilt sprang from the first sin in Eden’s paradise. Because of its nature, sin is always sinister, never helpful or positive. For happiness, contentment, and victory in life to be ours, sin must be dealt with realistically, accurately, and drastically.

First John 3:4-9 pictures the results of salvation in the Christian’s life. True salvation brings heaven to our hearts and correction to our corrupt approach to living. Salvation means a transformation, a new birth.

As we investigate the results of salvation given in 1 John 3:4-9, let us ask, “Are these results evident in my life?”

I. THE BURDEN OF GUILT IS LIFTED (1 John 3:4, 5)

When one is saved his sins are forgiven. Guilt, simply defined, is the condemnation which rests upon us because we have transgressed the

law of the Lord. When we are fully conscious of this condemnation we feel defeated, lost, and out of step with God, others, and ourselves. But here is the Good News! Jesus came to take away sin! (3:5).

John reminds us of two great truths concerning Jesus: His purpose of coming into the world and His perfection of character. The reason for His bursting forth into history, John says, is capsuled in four scarlet-colored words: “to take away sins.” These are all-encompassing words which take in the whole of His redemptive work. All that had to be done has been done! Praise God! Anyone can come to Jesus on the conditions of the gospel and be guilt-free.

Jesus, most assuredly, qualifies to be our Savior through His perfection of character. What more could we ask? Jesus offers pardon from sin and a perfect pattern for living!

Psychologists are agreed that guilt is one of life’s heaviest burdens. It can completely weigh us down. A few years ago I saw a skit that I shall not soon forget. A man staggered onto the stage carrying a heavy sack across his back. He was loaded down to the point of being unable to do anything else but carry the sack. He was stopped by some happy, joyful people who were free from such a sack. They asked, “What is in your sack?” The man replied, “This is my burden of sin which I must carry through life.” They re-

sponded with astonishment, "Haven't you heard that Jesus has removed our burden of sin?" The man said, "Oh, yes, I've heard. I'm a Christian but I still have to carry my burden of sin. Though I've been forgiven I still have to carry it." They were overwhelmed. They said, "Oh, no, you don't have to carry your burden of sin anymore. Jesus has taken it away. That is the *very* meaning of forgiveness." But this man is not the only one in the world who is weighed down with guilt, is he? Even some Christians continue to carry the burden of guilt when Jesus has removed it from them.

Freedom from guilt releases us to really live in the fellowship of God. We were not pardoned to simply cleanse our slate; we were forgiven that we might live. Guilt blocks our lives with God. When we are forgiven we are free to enjoy God's presence in our lives.

II. THE BONDAGE OF SIN IS BROKEN (1 John 3:6, 7, 9)

When one is saved he is released from the tyranny of sin. He is no longer a victim of its bondage. John says that those who have come into Christ no longer habitually live in sin. He writes, "No one who abides in Him sins" (3:6). The Christian has been delivered from the power and penalty of sin.

Here is a passage which gives abundant proof that salvation breaks the bondage of sin. John gives a vivid description of the people about whom he writes: They are abiding in Christ (3:6); they have seen and known Christ (3:6); they have entered the way of righteousness (3:7); they have been born of God (3:9). His inspired declaration concerning these people is quite emphatic: He not only says they "sinneth not," but also he says they "cannot sin." That is, sinning is not their way of life any more. They have been radically transformed. Their actions, appetites, and attitudes are Christ-centered. The Christian has been wonderfully redeemed from the bondage of sin by the power of Jesus.

Conversion is somewhat like the Exodus. As the sinner is enslaved to Satan, the Israelites were the servants of Egypt. Conditions in Egypt were unbearable; misery reigned. The taskmasters were cruel; the labor was impossible. The multitude, under Moses' leadership, approached the Red Sea. Moses said, "Stand still and see the

salvation of God." As the sea miraculously parted, the Israelites crossed on dry land. They were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Corinthians 10:3). But the Egyptians, in deadly pursuit, plunged into the watery canyon. It was one of the greatest of all confrontations. The power of God, spiritual might, was face to face with the power of the flesh, military might. No contest! In seconds the Egyptian army was washed out of history into eternity. Divine deliverance had come. The bondage of Egypt was broken once for all time. The Israelites were now free to enjoy the fellowship and service of God.

Likewise, conversion to Christ culminates in baptism. From the water one enters a new life of fellowship and service to God. Although one must continue to put to death the evil that would re-enter his life, the bondage of sin is broken at the point of conversion.

Open your eyes to the release from sin you enjoy as a Christian. Keep a watchful eye for the devil who would try to regain his once-occupied fort. Replace the old habits and ways with the new, exciting life of Christ. Now that Satan's control has been overcome, live as a free man!

III. THE BUSINESS OF SATAN IS DESTROYED (1 John 3:4-9)

When one is saved the business of Satan is destroyed in his life. Jesus' major reason in coming was to defeat the devil. John says, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (3:8). We are not waiting for a victory to occur; we are enjoying the victory which has already taken place.

The word the Holy Spirit used for "destroy" means "to bring to naught." Jesus has brought to naught the aims, purposes, plans, and schemes of the devil in the life of the true believer. The earthly ministry of Jesus was an ongoing war with the devil. At the cross Jesus met the devil in hand-to-hand combat in the decisive battle. The resurrection announced the victor. The devil may still be active, but as he moves about he wears the battle scars of defeat! We are not awaiting the decisive battle; we are living in the wake of victory.

One young man said to a preacher, "I hear you speak of the devil, but I never run into him. He doesn't bother me. I do not have the trouble

with him you have.” The preacher replied, “You are going his way! Turn around and start going the other direction. You will run into him immediately. He won’t bother the man who is going his way. He does not need to, for his goals are already being accomplished in his life.” The devil does walk about like a roaring lion to destroy (1 Peter 5:8). But the Christian must remember that he can stand against him in the might of Jesus. We do not need to cower before him as timid soldiers. We must press the Lord’s victory to the ultimate!

The truth of the Lord’s victory calls for radical changes in most of us. Our attitude toward life must be different. We are to live as victors in Christ, not victims of the devil. Our actions must be the bold strokes of a winner. Life is to be lived as one continuous victory celebration. Our aggression in taking the fruits of victory is to be evident to all. We must make sure that everyone partakes of the victory! Jesus has fulfilled His purpose in coming! Victory is ours! Hallelujah!

CONCLUSION

Are the results of salvation evident in your life? Are you living in the sunlit glow of Jesus’ victory?

A great salvation has been offered. It is a salvation that lifts the burden of sin, breaks the

bondage of sin, and destroys the business of the devil.

Suppose someone came to you with a beautiful present as a token of his love. The gift was wrapped with attractive paper and a lovely ribbon. You received the gift, and, with nervous fingers, unwrapped it. You became so enthralled with the wrapping paper and ribbon that you hardly saw the gift itself. The gift was an expensive diamond, precious and priceless. But, somehow, you were more drawn to the wrapping paper and ribbon than to the diamond! You hugged the wrapping paper and ribbon to your heart and threw away the diamond! “How preposterous!” you say. But such as this happens every day. God has given us the blood-bought gift of salvation. It is surrounded by other minor gifts—wrapping paper and ribbons, you might say. We have become so enamored with the wrapping paper and the ribbons that we have overlooked the greatest of His great gifts, His gift of salvation! The angels must be utterly amazed at our actions.

Have we been guilty of breathing His air, spending His money, living on His land, and using His time, while failing to receive His salvation? Have we hugged the wrapping paper and ribbons of life to our hearts and thrown away the diamond-gift of His salvation?

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Illustrations

What Do You Want?

When James A. Garfield was president of Hiram College, a man brought for entrance as a student his son, for whom he wished a shorter course than the regular. "The boy can never take all that in," said the father. "He wants to get through quicker. Can you arrange it for him?" Mr. Garfield, a minister-educator, said, "Oh, yes. He can take a short course; it all depends on what you want to make of him. When God wants to make an oak he takes a hundred years, but he takes only two months to make a squash."

M. R. Denison

Determination

In the locker room of the champion Pittsburgh Steelers hung the sign which reads, "Whatever it Takes."

Prepare Your Children

In *Preparing for Adolescence* James Dobson recommends: "It is better to prepare than it is to repair."

God's Faithfulness

A little boy said he was going to play ball with God. "And how do you do that?" I asked. "Well," he replied, "I throw the ball up in the air and God throws it back."

The Mark of Love

"Agape sets its mark on the whole of Christianity. Without it nothing that is Christian would be Christian."

Nygren

Love

"Where love is, what can be wanting? Where it is not, what can possibly be profitable?"

Augustine

What the World Needs

"I can say that what the world needs is Christian love and compassion."

Bertrand Russell

Don't Give In

During her long lifetime, Helen Keller stubbornly refused to permit her threefold handicap to keep her spirit earthbound. Once she said, "I have looked into the heart of darkness and refused to yield to its paralyzing influence. In spirit, I am one of those who walk in the morning. What if all dark, discouraging moods of the human mind came across my path as thick as the dry leaves of autumn? Other feet have traveled that road before me, and I know the desert leads to God as surely as fruitful orchards and green, refreshing fields."

William H. Gentz

Only an Estimate

Phyllis Diller says she once spent seven hours in a beauty parlor—and that was just for an estimate.

These Times

Albert Einstein commented, "The perfection of means and confusion of goals is the hallmark of our time."