



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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KNOWING THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

By Wayne Camp

SERIES TEXT: *Philippians 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

TEXT: *John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

INTRODUCTION

In the series thus far we have considered the fact that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly and really man. We saw the importance, yea, the absolute necessity of knowing him both as God and man. In this message we will consider the necessity of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are two great mysteries that I have repeatedly meditated upon in the preparation of these messages. One is the Godhead. I do not understand, though I believe it whole-heartedly, how three Persons—Father, Word and Spirit—can yet be One God. Three co-equal, co-eternal, co-existent Persons, yet one God, one Godhead.

The second mystery is that which has to do with the hypostatic union of two separate and complete natures united in one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. This *one* person is so truly God it is as though he were not man, and so truly man it is as though he were not God. A hypostatic union. What is a hypostatic union? Let me illustrate. The boards of the tabernacle were made of wood overlaid with gold.

The boards were truly wood and there was no fusion of gold into the pores of the boards. Wood as though no gold was involved. These boards were gold. There was no wood mixed in the gold. The gold overlaid the wood entirely but did not become part of the wood and the wood did not become part of the gold. The board was not dipped in melted gold, it was overlaid with gold plating. Thus there was no mixture of gold and wood in the board. This is true in the two natures of Christ. He is not part God and part man. He is God. He is man. There is no fusion of the two natures. There is a complete human nature and a complete Divine nature.

But, let me assure you, this is what his work in the covenant of grace required. If he would die he must be man, because God cannot die. If that death would merit eternal life for the innumerable multitude given to him by the Father, he must be God, for not even a sinless man could merit eternal life for one sinner. If he would offer a sacrifice for sins as our great high priest, he must have something to offer, therefore he took flesh and blood, a body prepared by God; if that sacrifice would so satisfy God that every charge against us would be settled forever, he must be God for the merits of that sacrifice to be so infinite as to satisfy God for every sin of an innumerable multitude.

Two great mysteries—three persons who are one God and one Person who has two complete natures, Divine and human.

**TO KNOW CHRIST WE NEED TO KNOW
THAT THE SCRIPTURES NECESSITATED
HIS DEITY**

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Nothing could happen to him that was contrary to what was declared in the Scriptures. Nothing could fail to happen to him if it was declared in Scripture. *Luke 24:44 . . . all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.* God did not leave things to mere circumstances or happenstance. Nor did he leave matters to blind fate. He determined before exactly what was to be done. *Acts 4:27-28 For of a truth against thy holy child*

Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

The veracity and integrity of God's word could not be diminished one bit and the truth mean anything. If you or I could read one prophecy that definitely referred to Christ and show that it had not been fulfilled if it pertained to something of his earthly ministry, we could not trust the Scripture. *"All things must be fulfilled."*

The deity of Christ was declared in Scripture long before Christ was born. Consider *Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* Of course, Immanuel is translated, *"God with us."* In the virgin womb of Mary Jesus Christ did assume a human body and nature and take it into union with his Divine nature.

Consider *Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* Some of these names could only be applied to one who is truly God. The deity of Christ is evident from this verse.

The fulfillment of these two prophecies is seen in Matthew 1:18-23. *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*

How very careful God was to fulfill every passage pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ. He would have

A PLEA FOR CHARITABLENESS

by Jarrel E. Huffman

This article, I believe, is long-overdue to the brethren. The article is not written to suggest that anyone compromise truth on any issue. It is written, however, to elicit a God-honoring and Christ-like spirit among brethren.

The word "charitable," according to Webster, means, ". . . kindly in judging others; lenient." A kindred word, magnanimous, is from two Latin words—"magnus" (great) and "animus" (soul); hence, the word means "large-souled." Webster says magnanimous means ". . . rising above pettiness or meanness."

Every God-called preacher should have convictions on all Biblical and moral issues. Most will admit, however, that some issues are more important than others.

Brethren, it is hoped, would learn to disagree agreeably. But this is seldom the case. God's work is hurt more from "infighting" than from enemies without. That Baptists love to fight is attested through history. This energy, though, should be directed toward enemies of truth, rather than against a brother who does not dot all his "I's" and cross all his "T's" like one does himself.

I. TO WHOM ADDRESSED.

I address these words to pastors and members of Sovereign Grace Baptist Churches who purport to believe two major systems or areas of truth: (1) The doctrines of free grace, known as the five points; and (2) The doctrine of the local, visible church.

I am, therefore, making no reference to those who deny one or more points of the system of grace; nor am I aiming these remarks at those Baptist groups who teach a universal, invisible church. This is not meant to criticize, but to zero in on the ones to whom this is directed.

II. AREAS OF AGREEMENT.

True Baptists have a lot of areas of agreement--the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the way of salvation and the way of true service. It is unnecessary in this article to delineate these many areas.

III. AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT.

It is no secret that there are areas of **DISAGREEMENT** among Sovereign Grace Baptists. Yet, if there is agreement on grace (how God saves sinners) and on the local church (the place of acceptable service), can there not be some latitude on other matters? If not, we will soon find that there are but few, if any, with whom we can fellowship.

For the record, the scenario at the present is something to this effect (I list these categories for emphasis):

Salvation	Church	Covering	Elements in Supper	Tribulation	Millennium
Doct. of grace	local church	head covering	wine	Pre-trib	Pre-mil
Doct. of grace	local church	head covering	wine	Mid-trib	Pre-mil
Doct. of grace	local church	head covering	wine	Post-trib	Pre-mil
Doct. of grace	local church	head covering	wine	A-mil	
Doct. of grace	local church	head covering	grape juice	Pre-trib	Pre-mil
Doct. of grace	local church	head covering	grape juice	Mid-trib	Pre-mil
Doct. of grace	local church	head covering	grape juice	Post-trib	Pre-mil
Doct. of grace	local church	no head covering	wine	Pre-trib	Pre-mil
Doct. of grace	local church	no head covering	wine	Mid-trib	Pre-mil

The charted categories help us to see the various areas of **DISAGREEMENT** among the brethren.

There is no exaggeration in these statements. All of these categories are found among Sovereign Grace Baptist pastors and churches. I'm sure I could find more areas, but these are the common ones with which brethren find cause to disagree.

The question, therefore, remains, "Should these matters cause a break in fellowship among brethren? Some brethren answer, "Yes." Others say, "No."

IV. ATTITUDES.

There are various ways to approach these problems of disagreement. Let us notice the usual methods used by the brethren:

A. No Fellowship.

As would be expected, some brethren have disfellowshipped all those who disagree--on one, two, or more points. With some brethren, **ONE POINT** is sufficient grounds for disfellowship. This seems to be especially true in matters of **ESCHATOLOGY** (doctrine of last things). Word has already reached this writer that some churches and pastors have decided that no one can fill their pulpits who disagree on the millennium (see chart). Are we unwilling to admit that great Baptists of the past disagreed on this issue? Did J. R. Graves, J. M. Pendleton, B. H. Carroll, A. W. Pink, J. P. Boyce, and many other great Baptists, agree on the millennium?

B. Anathematize.

Some brethren go a step further than simple "non-fellowship." Those with whom there is disagreement (on their pet themes) must be denounced as "heretics." This has always been a favorite pastime for some. Since they cannot excommunicate as do the Catholics, and since they cannot have their church trials, as do the Protestants, heretics are dealt with in a different way. This usually takes some form evidenced by *Diotrephes* ". . . who loveth to have the preeminence" and who would cast ". . . them out of the church (fellowship)" (III John 9,10).

Are we to assume that God gives all men the same light on all issues at the same time? Is there no room for growing in grace? Is there no freedom to study for oneself? How many who read this were once Arminians? How many have changed their minds, at

least to some degree, on matters of eschatology? Are our minds, thoughts, actions, and positions to be governed by what the brethren think?

Many of us in Sovereign Grace Baptist Churches have been "cast out" of certain Baptist groups--the SBC, ABA, BMA, BBF, etc. Are we to assume that this casting out placed us in the center of orthodoxy, and that all who disagree with us are out in left field somewhere?

C. Ignore.

Some Baptists have always been good snobs. They pride themselves in turning up their noses as heretics walk by. Their attitude is, "Just ignore old Brother So-And-So; he's departed from the faith." Does this attitude display Christian love and tolerance? Or does it have a touch of Phariseeism in it?

Some people's eyes and ears are closed to anything not shaped on their own anvil. If they are forced to listen to certain brethren, they do so with disdain. And if they read the writings of certain brethren, it is but to criticize.

V. SUGGESTIONS.

If you are still reading this article, let me make a few simple suggestions. If these seem to be beneficial, fine; if not, just ignore them.

First, I am not asking anyone to compromise any area of truth. I am not suggesting that you lay down any convictions. But this is **NOT THE ISSUE**. As noted on the above CHART there are various stances on certain subjects--the head covering, the elements in the Supper, the tribulation, and the millennium. **LOOK REAL CLOSELY AND YOU WILL SEE WHERE YOU FIT IT!**

Personally, I have my convictions on all the above subjects. And I have come to these positions by study and prayer (and I trust, the Lord's leadership). And I would expect any brother to make the same statement.

Second, I am not speaking of the two major themes on the CHART (doctrines of grace and the local church). I am writing to brethren who agree on these points.

Third, let us practice humility as the Lord enjoined us. None of know everything. To the chagrin of some, **ALL MEN HAVE BLIND SPOTS!** It is the

height of arrogancy to presume that one sees all issues clearly.

Fourth, let us pray for those with whom we have disagreement. Perhaps the Lord might just lead them to the truth (assuming you have it, and they don't). A hard-nosed, cantankerous attitude is not apt to change anyone's position.

Fifth, write or call those with whom you disagree on one or more of the above issues. It might just be that they don't deny or believe all that you have heard (through the pastoral grapevine, of course). And you might learn something yourself, if you are open to truth.

Sixth, let us be willing to listen to the other man's position. After all, brethren, **BAPTISTS HAVE DIFFERED IN THE PAST WITHOUT BREAKING FELLOWSHIP!** I refer to these areas of controversy. The sad truth is this: many great Baptist preachers of the past could not fill the pulpits of some Sovereign Grace Baptist Churches of today. That is, if they are consistent.

Seventh, let us practice patience. For my part, I am much more patient with brethren than I used to be. Having been brought out of the bondage of Arminianism by the providence of God, I have taken the position that **THERE JUST MIGHT BE OTHER AREAS** in which I am deficient in knowledge. Let us be very careful not to set certain positions in **STONE**. When we become overly dogmatic, and set our beliefs in concrete, it is very difficult to change positions (due to pride).

VI. CONCLUSION.

It has often been said, correctly, that ". . . a person convinced against his will is unconvinced still." The actual statement is from Samuel Butler (1600-1680), who said:

*He that complies against his will
Is of the same opinion still.*

Thus, to reiterate, this article is not to suggest that any brother lay down any conviction on any issue until God moves him to do so. But let us be sure that we are not moved to positions by peer pressure.

I feel that brethren should be constantly growing in the grace of the Lord. And since none have reached perfection, there must of necessity be changes on the controversial issues (not on grace and the church).

I have my own personal convictions on all the matters (see CHART). Yet, I have not decided to disfellowship anyone who disagrees on the head covering, the wine question, or matters of eschatology.

Remember, there is a huge difference between a "mind set" and a "heart conviction." Criminals have a mind set on crime, but no heart persuasal to do right. Politicians may have a mind set on greed and power, but no heart desire for truth. But the Bible-believer must begin with a "heart belief" on truth. Mind-set apart from heart-conviction is worthless.

This article concerns the subject of **CHARITABLENESS**. If you have missed my point, so be it. If you have been reading with an open mind, may God use these words to His glory and to the good of His people.

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no skeptic be able to get a toe-hold in a crack in his word. (See, KNOW, Cont. Page 6, Left Col.)

KNOW, Cont. From Page 2

Every jot and tittle must be fulfilled. The man Christ Jesus must also be *God With Us, Emmanuel, Mighty God and Everlasting Father.*

TO KNOW CHRIST WE NEED TO KNOW THAT THE THINGS HE ACCOMPLISHED BY BEING MADE FLESH NECESSITATED HIS DEITY

There were many things that Jesus Christ must accomplish during the days of his flesh. There were many things that only a mere man, even a sinless man, could not accomplish. Therefore, the things which he must accomplish and the work which he must finish while on earth necessitated his being God.

He gave us the true bread from heaven which we must eat by faith if we are to have eternal life. *John 6:51-56 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

Now, it is true that the flesh and blood which he gave and to which he refers in this passage was human flesh and blood. But, the flesh and blood which he would give must have sufficient worth and merit to justify God giving eternal life on the grounds of it. No human person, even a sinless man as Adam before the fall or the sinless man Jesus, could give his flesh and blood for the life of the world unless there is something that is united with that flesh and blood that makes it of infinite dignity, merit and worth. It is the hypostatic union of the Divine nature with the human nature that lends it the infinite merit required for the giving of eternal life.

Even though we have seen that he received his human nature from being formed in the womb of

Mary; he shows its infinite worth and merit, its power to give everlasting life, its power to cause us to never hunger or thirst again by calling it the bread from heaven. *John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* If his human nature, his flesh and blood would be the bread and drink of eternal life, they must be so vitally united with the Divine nature as to be able to call them bread from heaven. His flesh and blood, in order for him to die, must be human, but, in order to redeem and save they must be so united with his Divine nature that it would make them of infinite worth and value so as to be of sufficient merit and worth to redeem.

He made it possible that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us in spite of the weakness of our flesh. *Romans 8:3-4 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

If we are to enter into heaven we must have a righteousness equal to that of God in its purity. In fact, we must be made the righteousness of God. The law was weak through the flesh and no man could meet its demands. Someone in the flesh must satisfy that holy law if that required righteousness is ever fulfilled. The man Christ Jesus was made in our likeness, the likeness of sinful flesh. That man, Jesus, must also be God the Son if his obedience would be of such infinite merit that it could be imputed to the account of all that innumerable multitude for whom he was obedient and for whom he paid the penalty of the law. He abolished the enmity of the law by keeping and fulfilling it in a human nature like ours. *Ephesians 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.*

He did every thing necessary to present us holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight. *Colossians 1:21-22 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight.*

I would remind you that this was accomplished in the body of his flesh through death. I would also remind you that God must be in him if that grand work of reconciliation would be accomplished. **2 Corinthians 5:19** *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

There is another accomplishment of Christ that is simply amazing when you meditate upon it. He revealed God in his humanity, his flesh. **1 Timothy 3:16** *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.* His glory was the glory of the only begotten of the Father. **John 1:14** *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. **Colossians 2:9** *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

There is a manner in which the whole creation reveals God. **Romans 1:19-20** *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.* Look into the heavens and they reveal his glory. **Psalms 19:1-3** *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.* **Psalms 97:6** *The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.*

God revealed himself in different ways down through the ages. God is revealed in his written word and that is a much fuller revelation of God than in nature, or in visions and dreams. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

God's greatest revelation of himself which man has every seen was in the person of Jesus Christ. If we would behold his glory it must be in God the

Word made flesh. If we would see God we must see him in his Son made flesh and dwelling among us. **John 1:18** *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

If we are to see the fulness of the Godhead we must see it bodily in the man Christ Jesus. **Colossians 2:9** *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

It is a marvel of all marvels that God has revealed himself in the flesh. It is amazing that no man has seen the Father at any time and, I am of the firm conviction that we will never see him. It has pleased him that all fulness dwell in the Son. It has pleased him that we see him in the Son. And, it has pleased him that Jesus Christ have preeminence in all things. **God was manifest in the flesh.** When we see him in glory, it will be the man Christ Jesus. When he comes again it will be the Son of Man coming in his glory.

He destroyed the power of Satan and delivered his people from the fear of death. **Hebrews 2:14** *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.* If he would destroy the one who has the power of death he must do it through death. Since God cannot die he must partake of a nature that can die so he took on him flesh and blood. But, if he would enter into the realm of death and by it have the power to destroy him who had the power of death, he must be more than a mere sinless man. He must have power to give his life, not have it taken from him by man. He must have power to lay down his life and take his life up again. **John 10:18** *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*

He has opened up the way for us to enter into heaven. **Hebrews 10:19-20** *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.* Unfallen Adam did not have access to heaven but was confined to this earth even before his fall. He never went up into heaven to fellowship with God but God would walk in the garden and fellowship with Adam and Eve there. It goes without saying, I trust, that it was the Second Person of the

Trinity, the eternal Word, who walked and fellowshiped with Adam. At least, if Adam saw him, it had to be the Eternal Word.

A mere sinless man could not open up a way into heaven for sinners merely on his human merits. The blood of the one opening the way must be of such infinite worth that all who are redeemed by it can enter into the very presence of God. The infinite worth of the shed blood of Jesus Christ must be attributed to the hypostatic union of the Divine nature with the human nature. That union is such, and the Divine nature so affects the human nature that the blood of the Man Christ Jesus can properly and Scripturally be called the blood of God. *Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

He suffered for our sins and brought us to God. *1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. 1 Peter 4:1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*

Let me remind you again that Christ's death was a death in the flesh; his deity did not die; God cannot die, he was put to death in the flesh, he suffered for sins in the flesh. Deity cannot suffer. God cannot experience pain. The suffering of Christ was in the flesh. The death of Christ was in the flesh. No aspect of his deity suffered.

But, if that death was to serve its purpose and secure our justification, that suffering and death must have infinite worth and infinite merit. That was achieved through the union of the Divine nature with the human nature, lending the human nature the Divine merit and infinite worth. Because of this it is said that they crucified the Lord of glory. *1 Corinthians 2:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

He did all these things in the flesh and through his suffering and death in the flesh, but, it would have done us no good had all that he did in the flesh not received infinite worth and merit from the union of his Divine nature with his human nature. For this and other reasons, the Redeemer must be God, as well as

man.

WE NEED TO KNOW THAT HE MUST BE GOD IF HE IS TO LAY HIS HAND UPON GOD

A mediator is not a mediator of one therefore the mediator could not be either God or man; he must be both God and man. *Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.* If he would manifest God to us he must be God in the flesh. *1 Tim. 3:16.* If he would set forth the exact, precise will of God he must be God. *Hebrews 1:1-3 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

If he would serve as the angel of the everlasting covenant of grace, he must be privy to that covenant and none were but the three persons of the Godhead. *Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*

If he would be our Counsellor concerning the things of God he must be mighty God and everlasting father. *Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

CONCLUSION

He must be God with us. He must be the eternal Word made flesh and dwelling among us. A sinless man could never save if he were not also God, for salvation is of the Lord. God alone can save and he shall save his people from their sins. If he is to do that he must be God and he was God. His glory was the glory of the only begotten of the Father. God is the God of all grace and he was full of grace. He was eternally rich but became extremely poor that we

might be rich. In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Yes, his name was called Emmanuel, God with us! His name was called

Mighty God and Everlasting Father. He is the Lord of Lords, King of kings.

SINNERS: (Safe, Condemned, Saved)

by
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INTRODUCTION

The question of total hereditary depravity has always been a big factor in all confessions of faith and theological stances—good or bad. While most groups within Christendom give vocal adherence to the doctrine of depravity, only a precious few are logical and Scriptural in the matter.

Every Bible student is fully aware that mankind has some kind of relationship to Adam. Various theories have arisen in the matter, which the author does not have time nor space to discuss in detail in this article. Suffice it to say that Adam's sin was the sin of the race, and whatever happened to him in the fall, happened to all of his posterity. Consequently, men are either fallen, and are totally depraved, or they are not. There is no middle ground in the matter.

The Catholics, for instance, along with most Protestants, admit moral depravity. They see a direct connection between the "father" of the race and his "children." Both of these groups attempt to rectify the situation through "infant baptism." This so-called "baptism" is supposed to make the child *SAFE* through means of the ritual and a godfather or godmother. Then, about the age of twelve, these are catechized and admitted into the membership of the church. However wrong these practices are, they have come about due to the matter of depravity.

Baptists, for the most part, have repudiated such practices, insisting that believers only, after a credible profession of faith, are candidates for baptism. With the one group (Catholics, etc.), baptism is viewed as a saving ordinance (Catholics admit in their manuals that baptism to them is "the new birth). With the other group (Baptists), baptism is viewed as a pictorial ordinance which shows that life is already resident in the one baptized. Thus, there is a vast difference in the two positions.

Although "infant baptism" is not the subject of this article, there is a necessity to show the conclusions to which some come as a result of admitted **DEPRAVITY**.

Where does this leave Baptists in the matters of depravity, salvation, etc. While most Baptists are free from "infant baptism" and "confirmation," all are not free from the shackles of tradition and invention. What is to be done with infants? Or they saved automatically, or do we do something to save them (as the Catholics and Protestants)? Baptists are generally agreed that no ordinance is efficacious to the saving of anyone—infant or adult.

Among Baptists of the Arminian persuasion, an "age of accountability" has been invented. I repeat, *INVENTED*, for there is not one hint anywhere in Scripture that such an age exists. Sadly, some who have been brought to the doctrines of grace, still seek a position that solves the infant problem—without calling it "an age of accountability."

I. ON THE ROAD.

Recently, I read an article in the *Missionary Baptist Searchlight* by Dr. Paul Goodwin of Little Rock, Arkansas. Dr. Goodwin is a former instructor of mine. I respect Dr. Goodwin as a Christian gentleman and a student of the Scriptures. There is no animosity on my part in the writing of this article. The one thing that moves me to say these words is *TRUTH*.

Dr. Goodwin in his article, "On the Road," makes a number of statements which we want to consider. First, he gives the following:

"For a few years I traveled the road of *innocency*. I must have been a *sinful child*; I certainly got my share of whippings with a peach tree limb. Those were the years *before I reached the age of accountability*. The shed blood of Jesus covered my sins *before I became accountable*."

"I was a *safe sinner* and had I died during that time I would have gone to heaven." (Italics mine, JEH).

Let us carefully observe some of these statements: First, Brother Goodwin calls this period of time "the road of innocency." Yet, he admits in the same breath that he was a "sinful" child. Brother Goodwin is not saying that those "on the road" of life at this age are without sin; he is saying that they are regarded "innocent" by God until they have reached a certain age. All of this sounds good, and few Baptists would question the statements, but such is without Scripture foundation.

Second, Dr. Goodwin says that he lived a number of years before reaching "the age of accountability." Again, all of this "sounds" good. But where is the Scripture proof? Are men born "innocent," and then become "guilty"? Where in all of Scripture do we find that some people are innocent and some are guilty—that is, outside of Christ's saving work? And this brings us to the next point.

Third, Dr. Goodwin declares that "the shed blood of Jesus" covered his sins during this time when he walked in "innocency." One might ask here, "If he was innocent, why did he need to be covered by Christ's blood?" Being reared in the atmosphere of Arminianism, I never questioned such statements for years. And I do not do so today to be argumentative. Brother Goodwin is certainly sincere in his position, and has a right to his opinions. The Biblical truth is, however, that Christ's blood was shed for His elect (I Pet. 1:18-21). Such was purposed from eternity (Revelation 13:8; 17:8), and wrought by Christ at the cross. If Christ paid the penalty for the sins of His people (and He did), and He Himself declared the work is "finished" (John 19:30), then what remains to be done? How can anyone say that some infants, reckoned "innocent" and under "Christ's blood," later end up in hell as adults?

Fourth, Dr. Goodwin describes himself during this period as a **SAFE SINNER**. That is, during the time of "innocency," and before reaching the "age of accountability," he says he was a **SAFE SINNER**. And this certainly sounds logical. To the majority of religionists, it sounds "good."

But how can any sinner be reckoned **SAFE**, unless cleansed by the shed blood of Jesus Christ? And if cleansed, a sinner can never be condemned. Sinners like to feel "safe" in their sinning, to be sure, but that

does not make such a fact. I have read a number of good theological works and have never seen the statement "safe sinner" apart from the salvation in Jesus Christ. Such is never applied to those who have not experienced regeneration. Also, one may search through the long line of Baptist Confessions of Faith, and he will never find the expression "safe sinner."

Let us hear Dr. Goodwin further as he goes "on down the road" of life:

"My life was spared and there came a time when I became aware that I was a sinner and that my sins were against God. I traveled that road of doubt and fear for perhaps six or seven years. It was a road of condemnation. Had I died in such a state of unbelief and rebellion I would have been eternally and irrevocably lost. I would have gone to hell because of my unbelief."

Let us make a few comments on this statement. Here Dr. Goodwin states his experience of grace in which we rejoice with him. God by His Holy Spirit convinces men that they are sinners (and they were so before they were convinced), and graciously brings them to a saving knowledge in Christ. Dr. Goodwin is certainly correct in stating that if men die in the state of unbelief and rebellion they go justly to condemnation.

But let us hear Dr. Goodwin further as he moves "on down the road" of life:

"Again my life was spared (praise God) and at the age of 17 I acknowledged my sins to God, repented of my rebellion against God, and received His Son, Jesus, as my personal Saviour. Through God's marvelous grace *I became a saved sinner* on the road to heaven." (Italics mine, JEH).

Dr. Goodwin continues:

"My life has not been the same since . . . The road has not always been smooth, but it has been a journey of faith, hope, and love. It has not been blind wanderings in labyrinths of doubt and darkness . . . There is no doubt about it, I am traveling the 'Jesus Road' (John 14:6) and my final destination is heaven."

Again, we can rejoice in these statements by Brother Goodwin. Such statements speak of salvation by free grace which is the experience of all blood-bought ones.

II. STATEMENTS CONSIDERED.

A. A SAFE SINNER.

This most assuredly is a contradiction in terms. While the statement has been loosely used in religious circles for years, it is without Biblical basis. First, all men fell in Adam (Romans 5:12). The result is that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:12). Second, the fall in Adam pertains not merely to outward acts or works, but to the inner nature. Man by nature is a sinner. As such he is a rebel to God and has animosity in his heart toward the Creator. The heart of man is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9,10). Third, this places man in a state of condemnation--from conception and birth. To suppose that babes and infants possess some kind of moral and spiritual innocency is a denial of total *hereditary* depravity.

If any sinner is "safe," then he must be "saved." Both words mean the same thing. Anyone who is in Christ is both safe and saved. In fact, he is "safe" because he is "saved." And this salvation is altogether of God and grace (Ephesians 2:8,9). God's salvation reaches from eternity to eternity--from eternal foreknowledge to eternal glorification (Romans 8:29,30). And this salvation pertains to the elect or chosen of God (Ephesians 1:4-11).

Simply put, no sinner is *SAFE* unless He is in Christ Jesus by the new birth.

B. AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY.

All men as creatures of God are accountable for their deeds. There is no need whatever of inventing a supposed "age of accountability," which men reach at a certain point in life. If this were carried through to its logical conclusion, some men have lived who never were accountable to God because they never heard the gospel. Specious reasoning such as this leaves the "infant" question and the "heathen" question in the dark.

All men are accountable in Adam, their natural and federal head. From this lost mass, God chose some to salvation (we are not dealing with the subject of lapsarianism). Christ became their federal Head. These were elected by the Father to salvation, given to the Son to redeem (John 17), and in God's own good time are quickened by the Spirit. All in the eternal covenant of redemption are God's, and have Christ as their Head. All those not in this covenant stand condemned in Adam as their head. If men

would leave things here as God's Word has placed them, many problems of theology would be removed.

But some will immediately say, "But what about infants?" Are infants not human beings? Are they not descendants also of Adam? Can a clean thing come out of the unclean? Let us leave the matter of "infants" with God, who does with His own as He pleases. And what God does is always right (Genesis 18:25). Infants are not saved because they are infants. They are not saved because they are somehow "innocent." They, like adults, are saved by grace and grace alone, if they indeed be saved. No one enters God's presence apart from the new birth (John 3:8).

These statements should pose no problem for those who believe the doctrines of free and sovereign grace. They present a lot of problems to those of the Arminian persuasion. True Baptists have ever believed that regeneration *PRECEDES* faith and repentance. If one chooses to place regeneration as the *RESULT* of faith and repentance, then he must certainly declare all babes "innocent," and must invent an "age of accountability."

III. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.

First, these words are not written in a derogatory manner to condemn Dr. Goodwin or anyone else who holds the position set forth in his article, "On the Road." They are written in an attempt to approach the subject Biblically, and to remove traditions that have crept into Baptist ranks.

Second, the terms--*SAFE*, *CONDEMNED*, and *SAVED*, as they apply to people on the road of life certainly need qualification. All men are sinners by birth, nature, choice, and practice. This speaks of *CONDEMNATION*. While infants have not committed the amount of sins ignorantly or willfully that adults have, this fact does not remove culpability. Otherwise, one must throw out the term "*TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY*," as the Campbellites have done.

Third, the infant problem is one that incites great outbursts of emotional cries and pleadings. This article is not meant to get into this discussion, except indirectly. Please do not get sidetracked on this matter while studying these thoughts.

Fourth, the shed blood of Christ is a most blessed truth of Holy Scripture to all believers. Dr. Goodwin

rejoices in this truth as much as this writer. However, to speak of His shed blood is to speak of redemption or atonement. The Scriptures teach that Christ's atoning work was definite, particular, and limited to the ones given Him by the Father (John 17). All for whom Christ savingly died will be saved. None of the foreknown, elected, predestinated, called, and justified ones will fail to be glorified (Romans 8:29, 30). To teach that Christ's blood was wasted, ineffective, or that it fails unless man's will somehow approves the matter, is unscriptural.

Fifth, let us attempt by the grace of God, by diligent searching of the Scriptures, and by a willingness to admit error when found, to present

salvation as totally of grace and of God. Let us also be willing to lay aside traditions, even if "Baptistic," in the ongoing search for truth. Let us be sure that our declaration of Scripture agrees with our experience of salvation, and vice-versa.

Duncan, Oklahoma

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