

Ho-Hum Salvation

Restoring the Superlatives

We live in the so-called Bible belt of America. Even though secularism and atheism have made significant inroads in today's post-Christian era, many people yet remain who claim to be Christian, who have had some sort of experience in something calling itself Christianity. We still find many who were raised in Sunday School, or at some point made their "decision". They jumped through every hoop which the preacher held in front of them, and now they assume that they qualify as Christian.

A Christianity has gradually developed and become common-place which is far removed from that of the Scriptures. Our spiritual ancestors of generations past would hardly recognize us today. Something vital is missing.

A faulty message coupled with faulty methods (from no doubt well-intentioned evangelists) have produced today's anemic Christianity. A quart of truth is sold as if it were a whole gallon. Many have had their spiritual wounds only slightly healed, and have been told *Peace, peace; when there is no peace* (Jer. 6:14). This "gospel" has left many with a rather nonchalant attitude about being saved. God's grace is no longer *Amazing Grace*, it is simply taken for granted. "Sure I am a Christian, so what?"

This predicament did not spring up overnight. More than a hundred years ago, C.H. Spurgeon lamented:

Sometimes we are inclined to think that a very great portion of modern revivalism has been more a curse than a blessing, because it has led thousands to a kind of peace before they have known their misery... Everything in this age is shallow. Deep-sea fishing is almost an extinct business so far as men's souls are concerned.

What is missing today? To answer briefly: THE SUPERLATIVES ARE MISSING. Let me explain.

1. We are more sinful than we realize. While we are willing to pay a little lip service and admit we are sinners, all we really mean is that we are somewhat less than perfect. But the Scriptures go much further in describing our natural condition. We are *dead in sins*. Our *heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*. We are all *slaves of sin*. We have no hope. (Eph. 2:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 6:17; Eph. 2:12.) With Paul the Apostle we can all lay claim to the title of *chief* of sinners (1Tim. 1:15).

We must see our own sin in the superlative, as *exceeding sinful* (Rom. 7:13), literally, *sinful beyond measure*. Our wickedness is great and our iniquities are infinite. Our sins number more than the hairs of our head. (Job 22:5; Ps. 40:12.) We have *secret faults* (Ps. 19:12)—that is, sins of which we are guilty, which we ourselves do not even see. We cannot perceive all our own errors, but the living God sees and remembers them all. He sees more evil in our good works than we see in our bad works.

Our Lord taught that our love to Him will measure in proportion to our understanding of how much sin we have had pardoned: *to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little*. (Please read Luke 7:36-50.) Until we see the magnitude of our guilt before God, our ho-hum salvation will continue.

2. God is greater than we realize. Sadly, the concept of God has been sold short by modern Christianity. He has been reduced to nothing but a grandfatherly type...benevolent but impotent...a nice

relic but mostly irrelevant. In Ps. 50:21 God describes this attitude toward Him: *thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*

How different is the true God! He, who is the Creator and Sustainer and Judge of all, is infinite, incomprehensible, eternal, self-existing, three-in-one, perfect, unchangeable, all knowing, all-wise, all-present, almighty, sovereign, just, righteous, truthful, faithful, merciful, gracious, loving, patient, wrathful, taking vengeance against sinners. The single word which most describes Him is *holy*, which means separate or set apart. He is distinct from us, high and lofty, exalted in glory and every virtue of Deity.

He declared His Name (or character) to Moses in this way:

The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation (Ex. 34:6-7).

Notice the response of Moses in the next verse: *And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.* There is an indissoluble link between deep worship and a full-orbed view of the character of God. A right knowledge of God inspires a sense of awe in the hearts of men.

Today we are often told “God is not an angry God” and therefore we see no fear of God. But a God who is not (among His other perfections) angry is not the God of the Bible! Ps. 7:11 declares, *God is angry with the wicked every day.*

Indeed all of God’s attributes are greater than we realize. The truly outstanding hymns have sought to capture this concept of greatness and glory. *Crown Him With Many Crowns...Great God of Wonders...O For A Thousand Tongues*, etc.

3. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is more wonderful than we realize. I fear that a great number have been John-three-sixteened to death, without ever understanding where the emphasis in that precious verse lies. The original Greek emphasizes the little word *so*, which is virtually unnoticed nowadays. It was *such* a love that God had toward unworthy, perishing sinners, that He sent His only begotten Son to save all who believe in Him.

O the special, distinguishing love of God to sinners who deserve nothing but His wrath! From the heights of heavenly glory to the cross of deepest woe, Christ came to ransom His people. O the excellency of the God-man Jesus Christ! How incomparable is He!

How He suffered we, who trust in Him as Savior and Lord, will never know, for He died our death in our place. But those who die in their sin will know, for they will taste forever of that same wrath. In other words, either you must die, or Christ must die, or justice must die. (And God’s justice cannot die!)

In the cross of Christ the blessed attributes of God find harmony. Love is satisfied because the sinner is rescued. Wrath is satisfied because the sins are paid for. What a just method of redemption! What surprising grace and wisdom! In redemption we see the *exceeding greatness of his power* (Eph. 1:19). No ho-hum salvation this!

4. The benefits of salvation are more amazing than we realize. Here and now those who come to Christ receive, by His merits alone, a full pardon of all sin (Eph. 1:7). The privilege of a clean conscience before God is no small blessing.

But there is more than forgiveness: we are also *justified*, that is, declared righteous in His sight

(Rom. 3:24). It is one thing to have our sin put away, it is quite another to have the very perfection of Christ credited to us, and to be at *peace with God* in heaven (Rom. 5:1).

But there is more. We are adopted into His family as children, made *joint-heirs with Christ* (Rom. 8:16-17). Who ever heard of any earthly judge punishing his own son in the place of the criminal, pardoning that criminal, and then bringing him into his own family? Yet believers are enabled to call God *Father*. Such goodness and condescension is only Divine!

And there is still more. We are given *exceeding great and precious promises* (note the superlative!) of *goodness and mercy* all the days of our life on this earth, and then of glory to come. (2Pet. 1:4; Ps. 23:6.) He preserves us, and governs all things to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28). Furthermore, prayer is a tremendous privilege—to hold communion with such a One as He. We enjoy the honor of knowing Him, serving Him, living for Him, obeying His commands (though imperfectly in this life), and even of suffering for His Name.

Finally, there is heaven at last. We are not able to imagine the beauty and glory of being with Christ our Savior in a resurrected, glorified body for ever and ever, free from the very presence of sin and its effects in every form. It will be a delightful state to be near Him in a dimension we cannot fathom now. O the dignity and privilege of the redeemed! As Robert Murray McCheyne put it:

When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glaring sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

5. For the lost, hell will be worse than they presently realize. Just as heaven is indescribable bliss, so hell is indescribable misery and torment. The doom of the damned is indeed superlative. To be everlastingly removed from all benefits of God's goodness and to suffer the fullness of God's punishment, is more than we could express. Little wonder that salvation is called *so great salvation* (Heb. 2:3).

We have only scratched the surface of these truths. Our highest, fullest views are still only partial. The finite cannot fully comprehend the Infinite. Our understanding and experience should be ever deepening.

Here is the true worship of God: to contemplate the superlatives. The essence of worship is to regain a sense of the greatness of God and His glory. Restoring this perspective will restore our hearty adoration and ready submission. *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy...* (Rev. 15:3-4).

My friend, a ho-hum Christian is a contradiction in terms. One who is truly saved never gets over it. When his heart seems cold, he seeks to warm it with fresh meditation and prayer until his passion for God is restored. I urge you to consider these truths until you are broken and humbled at the feet of Jesus Christ.