



Storming Fortresses

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

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Thought Provoker:

An individual is spiritually profited when the Word convicts him of sin. This is its [the Word's] first office: to reveal our depravity, to expose our vile-ness, to make known our wickedness. A man's moral life may be irreproachable, his dealings with his fellows faultless; but when the Holy Spirit applies the Word to his heart and conscience, opening his sin-blinded eyes to see his relation and attitude to God, he cries, "Woe is me, for I am undone."

A.W. Pink

Twin Towers Symbol of Hypocrisy

Part 4: Saith the Lord, "But I have a few things against you!"

By

Murray McLeod-Boyle

Introduction

In this series we have been looking at some issues that were raised by the terrorist action of September 11, 2001, in New York. Primarily, we have set ourselves the task of examining the cause of the effects that this event has had upon Christianity. It has been our contention that Christianity has lost more than it gained. This is so because many Christians were unprepared for such an event and in the aftermath many were unable to give a credible explanation of the event from a Christian perspective. Since the event, Christian magazines

have carried stories of many kinds. This toing and froing would seem to bear out our contention that confusion in the Church exists as a result of this terrorist action.

Now, not every Christian individual or organisation was caught with their pants down. Communities like Messiah's Congregation in New York, under the able leadership of the Rev. Steve Schlissel and the Elders of that church, together with other congregations in that area, lead a most excellent example of Christian charity in action, the likes of which has not been seen in a good while.

From our perspective, it is the closest thing to the book of Acts of which we have seen or heard. Their actions not only gave hope to people in need at the epicentre, but gave opportunity for witness throughout the world.

The point here is very simple. Some Godly people, following the Biblical guidelines, reluctantly or otherwise, fulfilled a Biblical obligation and thereby stood like a beacon in the midst of a dark night. In the darkness, this smallest of lights reached to the very corners of the earth. Question. What would happen if we had more congrega-

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tions and individuals willing to follow the precepts of our Lord?

We have not wanted to be overly negative in our comments, however, we are convinced that it is time many of these failings—those canvassed in this series—were addressed. To put it in Biblical language, there are many who have a form of godliness, but who deny its power.

How do we recapture the power? We do so by recapturing the Biblical standard.

In our last article (Part 3) we noted that we can only successfully defend the Gospel when we defend the Gospel according to the Gospel. God's Word defends itself. We forget that the Word is a two edged sword (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 2:12 and 16). We have also made the mistake of seeing the "Word" as only being the Bible. We must remember that the Word is living and written. The Word seated at the right hand of

God the Father wields a sword. That sword is often found in His mouth (Rev. 1:16, 2:12 and 16, 19:15 and 21)¹ and He uses it as He leads the armies of heaven (Rev. 19:11-16) and as He metes out justice. The connection here is obvious. We do not have a faith that exists of ancient proverbs bound in a dust covered book. We have a faith that transcends all and is relevant in every age precisely because it is a living faith. The Testimony lives! The Word, in book form, speaks because He to Whom it testifies and He Who speaks by it, the living Word, lives. Sounds confusing, but it is a most excellent comfort.

In forgetting this most important doctrine we have turned aside from the truth. In turning from the truth we have become enamoured with modern thought and doctrine and not God's thought and doctrine.

We placed ourselves on this slippery slope the moment we began to take the Bible for granted. Consider our brethren in persecuted countries who have but a page of Scripture which they treasure. We, in our affluence, have whole Bibles everywhere, the majority of which collect dust. When next assembled for corporate worship, take note of how few people bring their own Bible. The modern trend of having a spare copy at the door for visitors or someone who was a little absent minded has blossomed into a trend to supply everybody who walks through the door. Not content with this, the rank corporate mentality has begun to copyright Bibles. On top of this wretched act has come one even worse. The corporate money-hungry mongers have begun destroying the unity of God's Word by marketing it to various splinter groups which have arisen as a direct result of adopting modern thought. As a con-

sequence we have the Women's version, the "Life Application Bible," the "Full Life" study Bible, the "Gift and Award" Bible, and last, but by no means least, we now have the "Jesus Freaks" edition.

Pray tell, what happened to one Faith, one Spirit, *one* Lord, *one* Baptism, *one* People?!!

This dissection of the Body is a modern concept. It is a concept devoid of Biblical warrant and is deeply rooted in the putrid humanistic doctrine of individualism.

To focus on the "freaks" edition for a moment, let us look at the write up. It states:

With stories of people in the Bible who trusted in God and had their lives radically changed as a result.²

Look at this nonsense. Of course the Bible is full of life change, that is why God gave it to us. "This is what you are, a sinner, this is what you must be, a saint." Change! Radical? Yes, but not in the way the "Freaks" mean it. Radical because it requires mighty (radical = fundamental) surgery by God to restore us to himself. Not as some street talk designed to make Christianity sound hip and cool.

We wonder at the use of the word "stories" as well. This term has come back into vogue lately. It is the favoured term of the liberals. It is a term that is often used to deny historical revelation in favour of legends and fables. In other contexts, it is used simply to show the human element, "This is how so and so struggled with the idea of God." It implies that every individual story is as valid as the next. Right and wrong are

1. For some typology, please look at Isaiah 11:4 and 49:2.

2. Koorong Sale Catalogue # 20, 2002. 13

abandoned. The authority of Scripture is made void as the Scripture becomes nothing more than examples of how people in former times and different cultures grappled with the idea of God.

Concepts like these, along with the issues mentioned in Part 3,³ are only possible because we have sought a Christianity apart from the revealed Word of God. We have abandoned sound doctrine for rot. Paul's words ring true:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.⁴

In order to advance our study, we would like to move beyond illustrations of the effect of this denial, to two key doctrines which were among the first casualties of this move. Here, we would like to look at two specific doctrines/beliefs that are missing from most churches and most individual Christians today. These two are inextricably linked. They are hand and glove. Without these beliefs, we have nothing. Without these beliefs returning to the centre stage of our system, Christianity will not have a second Reformation and we will never be a force to be reckoned with.

In the ashes and smoke of September 11, both of these doctrines lay gasping. A few Godly gave them a little air, but, for the most, ash was kicked in their face. They were tram-

pled upon and every effort was made to silence them.

As humanism and the celebration of mankind came to the fore, there was simply no room for these obstinate and contrary doctrines. They could not be allowed out in public. They would ruin President Bush's chest beating. They would undermine the American peoples confidence in themselves as magically triumphant over all. They would destroy all the ecumenical services. They would not allow Muslim and Hindu priests into the house of God. They would not allow any declaration of Islam as a just and tolerant religion. They would not allow any to hold the claim of Truth.

Consequently, they were left to die in the fire and ashes.

Brethren, they are not dead, but they are running out of life. We must take hold of them, care for them, and tenderly nurse them until they are once again restored to health.

Who are these majestic ones of which we speak? They are Sin and Covenant.⁵

1. The Doctrine of Sin

In our day, sin as a concept is frowned upon. "Sin, as an idea, must be eradicated because it gives man guilt," so the humanists say. Yet it is the concept of "original sin" that allows the Christian to put history and actions into a specific and understandable framework. Furthermore, it is the Biblical framework which al-

lows the Christian to take an objective view point from which he can make sense of the world in which he lives.

September 11 should be a wake up call to Christians world wide. Many have had their foundations shaken because they have built upon sand. They have swallowed lies wholesale. They have put humanism in front of Biblicism. They have exchanged God for garbage. Often this has been unwilling and unintentional, yet it has happened. Why? Simply, it is the result of Christians no longer studying God's Word in a productive manner. They have become Biblically illiterate. Many Christians no longer know how to read the Bible. Context, setting and genre mean nothing to them. All they know is proof texting—Grab a verse and make it say what you want it to. We know of no greater example of this shallowness than when the Christian Blind Mission sent out brochures with, "My people are destroyed for lack of vision", emblazoned on the front. Ministers are guilty of this same approach. We once asked a minister how his sermon was coming along. He informed us that he had written it. We asked further, "What text had been used?" The answer came back, "I am still looking for a text." Pray tell, how does one write a sermon without a text??!!

This illiteracy has lead to a great number of Christians adopting humanist beliefs and as a consequence they have denied the doctrine of sin as important and strategic. It is time we recovered its importance.

3. In Part 3 we illustrated the concept of defending the Gospel apart from the Gospel with reference to Genesis. We noted that a denial of the historicity of Genesis, especially the first chapters, leads to the destruction of several key doctrines. It is for this very reason that those who depart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ try at the outset to deny the Genesis as literal.

4. *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977. All Scripture quotations are from this source unless specified otherwise. 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

5. Covenant will be dealt with in Part 5.

Some may now be in the process of cringing. In the recesses of the mind the words, “Oh no! Not that negative old doctrine again!” are beginning to echo. Yes, afraid so. It is time that this old, horrid doctrine was understood and appreciated. Those who deny the centrality of the doctrine of sin are in fact denying the door to life. They are putting life beyond reach and exposing the Christ of glory to shame. “How so?” you ask. Let us explore and see.

A. Sin and Justification

When we look at the Reformation and search for a single defining element we often return to Luther and his search for salvation. We sum up the Reformation by speaking about the rediscovery of “justification by faith.” We have little problem with this. So, let us consider this summary for a moment.

What does the concept of justification imply? Well, at the risk of inventing some new words, it implies unjustifiedness in a person. It implies an unrighteousness about a person. To be unjust is to be outside of law or right. To be in this position is to be lawless. Scripture tells us that, “everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4).” Therefore, the desire for justification is equally a statement about our unjustifiedness before God. It is an admission that there is a breakdown in the relationship between ourselves and God. It is an acknowledgment that we are the lawless and that God is the just Judge. So when Luther craved for justification he was looking for freedom from sin and a rightness (justified state) with God.

We also need to look at the “by faith” aspect as well. How does one understand the unrighteous state into which we have plunged ourselves? Is release possible? Is it deadly if the

condition is allowed to remain? Can one remove this disposition by one's own actions? Luther battled with all these questions. He wanted to be justified. He knew that something was missing in his life. He wanted an answer.

Luther's position is instructive. He is a monk. He belongs to a religious order. He has been baptised. He has been taught that rightness with God can be gained through works. So in answer to the questions, Luther knew that release was a possibility, that no release spelt death. He knew this well. The sticking point was the “how?” “Can I earn this myself?” became the all important question. He had been taught that he could. Luther applied himself diligently, but he knew that all his monastic chastenings had not brought him one iota closer to God.

By God's grace, Luther was shown the answer. He came to understand that our works are worthless and can avail not a thing in regard to us being justified. The answer lay in the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. How was this achieved? It was by faith. By faith the believer took hold of Christ's righteousness. This was how a person received a standing before God. All else was but a striving after the wind.

This brought two things to the fore. First, salvation was not a reward for faith. We do not receive salvation because *we decide* to put our trust in Christ. Faith, in this context, is the means by which we take hold of and by which the benefits of Christ's righteousness are communicated to us. Hence, the concept that man could correct his state of unrighteousness was sunk once and for all. Second, the power of sin to hold men captive to death was underscored. Sin was a formidable force. Man could not correct the problem by a

mere determination of his own will. He could not work himself into a state of righteousness or remedy the fact that he was a transgressor and subject to judgement as a consequence.

To be justified, *sin had to be accounted for*. The ledger had to be squared. This could only occur with a legal transaction. Therefore, to be righteous, an imputation had to take place. A man's debt had to be paid by another. His punishment as a debtor borne by another. Last, he had to be transferred from the status of a debtor to a that of one whose account balanced.

Consequently, in the teaching of Luther and the Reformation, the meritorious work of Christ and His right standing before God had to be imputed to *the sinner*, who, until this happened, only stood before God as an object of wrath (Rom. 3:21ff; 5:1f; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3).

As we have noted, this doctrine came to be known as ‘justification by faith.’ Our point here, is that at every stage in this doctrine the concept of sin is present. Why do we need to be justified? Sinner! Why can we not justify ourselves? Slave to sin! Why cannot we apprehend the righteousness of Christ ourselves? Dead in sin! What is the debt to be paid? Sin! What is the infraction that caused the debt? Sin! How is Christ righteous? Sinless! What is Christ's righteousness? Sinlessness! How does the substitutionary death achieve salvation? The Sinless died for the sinful! What is the redeemed persons standing before God? Dead to sin!

This is why the demeaning of this doctrine is a putting of Christ to shame. If you do not believe in the doctrine of sin, then you deny the doctrine of atonement. If you deny the doctrine of atonement, you deny

the death of Christ. If you deny the death of Christ, then you trample the Blood of the Son of God underfoot. To do this is to deny God's gift of salvation.

No man shall be saved/justified unless he is covered by the Blood that flowed from Immanuel's veins. Why? *Immanuel's blood destroys every trace of sin*, that is why!

It is as William Cowper depicts it in that beautiful old hymn:

1. There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

2. The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

3. Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its pow'r
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more;
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.⁶

B. Sin and the Person.

Let us look at the subject of sin from a slightly different angle. Let us look at it from the perspective of the person.

Today the doctrine of sin is shunned. We hear, "love the sinner hate the sin." We are told that to win people to Christ we must assure them of His love. We do not speak about condemnation and wrath, only love. We speak as though people are already in a loving relationship with God, just a little off track.

How correct are these ideas?

Well, as you may have guessed, in light of Biblical evidence, they are absolute error.

Let us take the cliché, "Love the sinner, hate the sin," as our point of contact with modern Christian thought and hold it up against historic Christianity.

As we have noted, this cliché is born of the modern anti-sin sentiment that is found almost everywhere in Christian circles today. It is born of the false idea that we can in some way make the Gospel more palatable to those outside the Church (cf. Rom. 8:7-8; Eph. 2:15). It is born of the heresy which sees people as estranged from God, rather than divorced from Him (2 Cor. 6:14-16; Neh. 13:3; Eph. 4:17-18). In other words, it sees people as in a relationship with God, though a strained relationship. This is very different from divorce where one has no relationship or legal standing. This idea is born of theology gone awry.

Instead of acknowledging the Biblical concepts, the moderns have taken on the world's criticisms and have modified their position so that they and their god do not seem too harsh, too restrictive, too intolerant, or too unloving.

However, this position is one which is nowhere countenanced in Scripture. You will not find one Biblical passage that supports the, "hate the sin, love the sinner," concept or one verse which supports the dividing of God's attributes.

If we turn back to the early chapters of Genesis we see the Biblical concept of accountability laid down clearly. In Genesis chapter 3 we have the horrific account of sin entering in to the world. The point to be noticed

is that the parties involved did not escape punishment within themselves. Upon discovering the tragic sequence of events, God did not call forth this nebulous undefined thing called "sin" and give it a swift kick in the pants and send it on its way. Then, full of love, turn around and frolic with Adam, Eve, and the snake, in joyful harmony, excusing all because He knew that "sin" was guilty and the three with whom He played, innocent.

No, No, No! A thousand times, No!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (Emphatic overkill, but the point must be made).

Turn to Genesis 3 in your Bible and read the account. God comes and finds Adam and Eve hiding. He asks for an explanation. The answer was piercing. One cannot imagine how God felt at that point. A great rending had taken place. That which had been pronounced to be very good, was now tainted. That which was pure, now corrupt. That which was peaceful, now chaotic.

Now God's reaction. He has heard everyone's story or case, if you will. Does he react as the moderns would have you believe? No. He calls each to account. The snake first. 'Cursed are you. Crawl on your belly and eat dirt you most disgusting of all animals!' The woman second. 'You will be in pain in child bearing. The propagation of lineage will be painful. You will be ruled by your husband despite your desire to be free.' Last, God addresses Adam. 'Pain and suffering will be yours. You will till the earth in futility. Weeds will infest your fields. You will eat only by toil.'

At every turn God's judgement involved a penalty borne by the accused in the flesh.

⁶. Joyful Noise Music Company, *Logos Hymnal*, (Fort Worth, TX: Joyful Noise Music Company) 1994.

Last, for those who remain unconvinced, look at verse 19b. There God announces that Adam will become as the fields that he now has to plough in order to eat. What could show more clearly the fact that sin shall be borne in the body of the guilty than this. Here is Adam. A man made in perfection. “Death” and “decay” were not in his vocabulary. Yet, as a consequence of his sin, God pronounces that His body will become dust again. It will return to the earth from whence it came.⁷

In short, there is a reversal of the creation order. In creation man was made from dust, had the breath of life breathed into Him, and was given life everlasting—on condition of obedience. In disobedience, life everlasting was taken away; the breath of life was then guaranteed to be removed, and as a consequence the body returned to the earth.

The body returned to the earth because of the judgement placed upon it by God.

Is this too complicated to understand! The person sinned, God judged the sin and the person with it, because the person was the one who committed the sin. When you are doing 200 kilometres an hour in a 60 km/h zone, who gets the ticket? The car, the nebulous little voice on your shoulder saying, “let’s blow the cobwebs out of her!” or you, the driver? It is you, the driver, the one who decided wilfully to transgress, that receives the ticket.

There are so many examples in Scripture that we cannot list them all, so a summary will have to suffice.

What happened to Lot’s wife? Did her disobedience affect her body (Gen. 19:26)? In the same account there is the lesson of the worthless fellows found in Sodom and Gomorrah. How did they fare? Did they pay in their bodies? Was the sinner and the sin separated?

How did Achan and his family fare? (Joshua 7:25-26). How about Jezebel? (2 Kings 9:33-37).

Let us skip to the New Testament.

There was that couple in Acts, Ananias and Sapphira. They sinned. Did they pay in their body? (Acts 5:1 ff.). Next, turn your mind to that false prophet and enemy of the Cross, Elymas. What was the consequence of his encounter with Paul (Acts 13:11).

Last, but by no means least, we have the testimony of Jesus Christ the Son of God, that those who shall not repent shall burn in the fires of Hell. They shall be tormented in their bodies:

Matthew 10:28: “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 5:29-30: “And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. “And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.

At this point we would like to draw your attention to the first text.

Note that Jesus speaks of both body and soul being thrown into Hell. What this is saying is that it is the whole man that will be consigned to Hell.

Therefore, the contention of the moderns cannot stand. First they commit an error by suggesting that God is only interested in punishing sin and not the sinner. Second, they completely miss the Biblical import that the man who sins shall pay for his sin. The only out is to have someone else pay for the sin. Here we come face to face with the doctrine of a substitutionary atonement. The sinner pays the price (his pockets are empty) or he accepts the payment of the debt by Jesus Christ on his behalf.

Here again, we see that any failure to give the doctrine of sin its proper place is tantamount to the trampling of the Blood of Jesus under foot.

C. Sin and Sense or The Importance of the Doctrine of Sin

God, through His prophet, Jeremiah, declared:

The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

This text is one of the fundamental reasons why Christians should be able to make sense of events like September 11. We have been granted the “good oil.” We have the “inside running.” God has placed the information in a nutshell for us and we despise it to our own detriment.

Another statement from God along these lines is found in Isaiah 53:6:

All of us like sheep have gone astray,

⁷ As a little aside, there is a clear testimony here for those who ponder when death entered. Adam was told he would die in the day he ate the fruit. We also know that Adam lived for several hundred years after. This baffles some. However, we see at this point a clear promise of God. It is now inevitable, Adam will die. His body has been subject to the law of death by his rebellion.

each of us has turned to his own way. The term is sinner.

As Christians we are able to make sense of Man because the Creator has told us exactly where the problems lie. We do not have to guess. We do not have to speculate. What we must do is have faith. We must believe what God has said.

Herein lies the problem. Christians have been loathed to hold fast the Word of truth. They have fallen for and swallowed the lies of humanism which elevate the status of Man. You see, sinful Man likes to feel good about himself. He revels in those things that make him feel good about himself as he is. This is why so many cults promise salvation by works. It appeals to the very nature of fallen Man. Unfortunately, this tendency is not limited to cults. It can be found within Christianity itself.

Too many in the Church have abandoned the doctrine of sin which is a touchstone for genuine Christianity. Drunk on the heady aroma of humanism, they have forgotten or never understood the doctrine of sin and its importance for a correct understanding of life. Thus the Church has found itself waning in power because it has adopted philosophies which belong to the world.

As a consequence, somebody's heinous sin is described as a "sickness." It is not any longer a manifestation of the heart's evil, but simply a chemical imbalance or the result of the environment in which this person was raised.

Similarly, when we hear of a depraved act, like the rape of a grandmother, we are apt to speak of the "animal" who has done this. Why should animals be degraded in such a way? We know of no instance in which an animal has committed such an act. Let us use the right language.

Furthermore it is important that we ask and answer this question: Are we sinners because we sin or are do we sin because we are sinners?

The moderns would take the first supposition as correct. The term sinner is only relevant because of the odd mistake that is made. Therefore, the term "sinner" is expendable. We do not really need it. Any term can be used to describe these odd hiccups that seem to come to the fore every now and then. More so, any one can be blamed for these hiccups. (So mothers, buy your children ice cream lest they become axe murderers!)

This belief is necessary in order to continue the celebration of Man. After all it is a bit hard to celebrate Man if there is an admission that he is faulty at the core. To illustrate this, think of a computer. No computer would be given awards for excellence if it were faulty at its very core. That is to say, if its circuitry and hardware contained faults that rendered it useless.

Herein lies the difference. The Bible describes Man in terms of the second supposition. Man cannot but sin because he is a sinner. It is his nature. Sin is to Man what mud is to a pig. Man is rotten to the core.

Now it is very hard to be rapt in praise of Man and at the same time acknowledge that there is a major fault within him. This is why many have sought to lead the doctrine of sin down a dark alley and strangle it. The doctrine of sin rains on the celebration of Man as great, mighty, pure, just, balanced, moral etc.

The excellence awards have been organised and the judges have suppressed the knowledge that they are going to award first prize to an abso-

lute lemon. They know it is a lemon, but they will not publicly acknowledge it because they have a vested interest (Rom. 1- giving hearty approval to those who do likewise).

So it is with sin. Any man who looks at his own heart knows that what he sees is ugly. He sees a rabid monster. He will not, however, admit to this. Moreover, he goes to great lengths to silence anyone who would seek to direct him to look again and compare it with a righteous heart.

As we have noted, the tragedy in this is not so much the world's reaction, after all, that is to be expected (Rom. 1:18 ff.). The regrettable fact is that too many individual Christians and denominations have adopted a very similar belief. They deny the Bible's teaching that Man is dead in sin. They deny the Bible's teaching that man is, in every area, bound in sin. Consequently, they invent a gospel that gives man an opportunity to save himself. All he has to do is exercise his will. These people come up with concepts like "Worm Theology" which they use in a derogatory way against Christians who rightly perceive the Scripture's teaching.

To speak of a Man as a "worm" is to these people anathema. Man has a higher standing than that. Man should never be demeaned. Man should never be described as worthless. Yet, this is error in light of the Scripture.

Isaiah 41:14, Psalm 22:6 and Job 25:6, all make reference to worms. In each the context would show that this is a very apt description of Man. In Isaiah the reference is to Jacob. The point being that he has no power or might to overthrow or withstand his enemies. It is Yahweh who alone will fight and defend Israel. This is an essential point which we do well to note. When we are carried away with

the ability of Men, we would do well to remember that not a hair from our heads can fall to the ground without God's permission.

This lesson has some important information in it that we must heed. Note carefully that in Isaiah 41 and Psalm 22 the words are addressed to or expressed by the covenant participants. Many today would say that it is wrong to speak of Christians in this way as it demeans the sacrifice of Christ. There is truth in this. However, it is equally demeaning when we exalt ourselves to the point whereby the righteousness of Christ is overlooked and we celebrate Man apart from that righteousness.

We would also do well to remember that Psalm 22 is Messianic. Matthew Henry, whether you agree with him or not, was so convinced of the Messianic link that he forthrightly attributes to Christ the status of the worm of which David spoke. It is his contention that this marks Christ's humiliation and condescension.⁸

Such statements are anathema to the moderns. They are so because the moderns claim a false righteousness. They have exalted man and displaced the doctrine of sin (and the majesty of Christ as a direct consequence).

We must realise that these two concepts are not equals. They compete for the same ground. We will either hold, Biblically, the idea that man is depraved and ravaged by sin, or we will deny the total depravity of man, and conclude, un-Biblically, that man is just a little out of tune.

Again this is a trampling of the blood of Christ under foot. If we claim that man is just a little out of tune, and not in need of a complete rebuild, then we lessen the need for the death of Christ—the pearl of great price becomes the pearl of pocket money.

Let us face this squarely. Could God be considered righteous if He has put His Son to death, when some lessor means could have satisfied??!! God forbid! May it never be! The *su-*

preme sacrifice was made because of the *extreme degree of sin* which had to be countered.

Therefore, as we have noted, it is no trivial matter to devalue the doctrine of sin. Denying or devaluing this doctrine is tantamount to unplugging the diagnostic equipment attached to a patient in intensive care. As the diagnostic equipment accurately reflects the true state of the patient, so the doctrine of sin reflects the true state of man.

Without this diagnosis it is not possible to effectively treat the problem. Bandages and aspirin may work for a while, but they will never heal the essential problem. So to, those who seek to treat Man apart from the doctrine of sin are simply prescribing aspirin. They will never bring healing.

In Part 5 we will take a look at that other majestic one, Covenant.

⁸ The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, as clearly and fully as any where in all the Old Testament, "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" (1 Pt. 1:11); of him, no doubt, David here speaks, and not of himself, or any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament, all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. The providences of God concerning David were so very extraordinary that we may suppose there were some wise and good men who then could not but look upon him as a figure of him that was to come. But the composition of his psalms especially, in which he found himself wonderfully carried out by the spirit of prophecy far beyond his own thought and intention, was (we may suppose) an abundant satisfaction to himself that he was not only a father of the Messiah, but a figure of him. In this psalm he speaks, I. Of the humiliation of Christ (v. 1–21), where David, as a type of Christ, complains of the very calamitous condition he was in upon many accounts.... II. Of the exaltation of Christ, that his undertaking should be for the glory of God (v. 22–25), for the salvation and joy of his people (v. 26–29), and for the perpetuating of his own kingdom (v. 30, 31). In singing this psalm we must keep our thoughts fixed upon Christ, and be so affected with his sufferings as to experience the fellowship of them, and so affected with his grace as to experience the power and influence of it....The complaint renewed of another grievance, and that is the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is by no means so bitter as that before of God's withdrawals; but, as that touches a gracious soul, so this a generous soul, in a very tender part, v. 6-8. Our fathers were honoured, the patriarchs in their day, first or last, appeared great in the eye of the world, Abraham, Moses, David; but Christ is *a worm, and no man*. It was great condescension that he became man, a step downwards, which is, and will be, the wonder of angels; yet, as if it were too much, too great, to be a man, he becomes a worm, and no man. He was *Adam—a mean man*, and *Enosh—a man of sorrows*, but *lo Ish—not a considerable man*: for he took upon him the form of a servant, and *his visage was marred more than any man's*, Isa. 52:14. Man, at the best, is a worm; but he became *a worm, and no man*. If he had not made himself a worm, he could not have been trampled upon as he was. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.