

Repent - Friday 18th April 2014

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

Beloved in The Lord,

One of the major problems in society today, and indeed amongst many Christians, is a lack of understanding about sin. Many people do not take sin seriously, and so they have no understanding that they need Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. Many people are overtaken by complacency and do not know that they are slowly dying.

Just recently I quoted a story in a sermon written by Billy Graham where he told of a person who was out in the extreme cold. He felt a numbness take over his hands and feet and a growing desire was to simply lie down in the snow and go to sleep. At the very last moment he realised what was happening and summoning any remaining strength he leapt to his feet and began to run around to get his blood to circulate.

There is also a second story that is a good illustration about complacency in regards to sin and that is the story of the frog in warm water. The parable says that you place a frog in a saucepan of cold water and slowly begin to heat it. The frog very happily sits in the warm water blissfully unaware that it is slowly warming up. As the water warms the frogs muscles relax. By the time the water gets hot the frog is no longer able to jump out and boils to death. Scientists argue about the truth of this parable, but whether or not it is scientifically true, the illustration is a good one. It illustrates what happens to a great many people.

We live in a fallen and dirty, sinful world. With every day it is incrementally getting worse. Things that society frowned upon 50 years ago, are today lauded as normal and acceptable behaviour. Things that were once shameful and sinful are now just part of everyday life. It is, we are told because we are now more enlightened and freer. I will not mention any specific thing, because there are so many that I could, and I do not want to draw your attention away from the main thought.

The main issue is that sin is not being taken seriously. People are not taking seriously what the Bible teaches about sin, and eternity. The majority of people no longer believe in hell, a place of eternal punishment. Many if not the majority believe that somehow all will be well after this life. They say if God is love, then out of His love He will not punish anyone with eternal hell.

The first part is correct. God is love, but the second part is a deception from Satan himself. Eternal punishment awaits all who have not confessed Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.

There is only path to God; there is only one door to Heaven and that is Jesus Christ. He Himself said: ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)***

It is of vital importance that we understand this. It is for this reason that we have Good Friday. If there was no hell; no eternal damnation; if God was not a loving God then we would not have Easter. If there was no need for man to turn from sin in repentance and to be reconciled to God, then Jesus would never have come, we would not have Church, we would not be here today because there would be no point.

There are two very clear Scriptures that we simply cannot ignore. They are:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

and

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23)

The word all, includes you and me. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That means that all deserve the wages of sin, namely, eternal death. But thank God, that there is a but in the first verse of Romans 6:23. Paul writes ***“but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

This is the Good News. Here we have a reason to praise God and to rejoice. In place of eternal punishment we can have eternal life; freedom; a home in The Father’s House.

Jesus has provided this for us through His death on Good Friday. He took our punishment upon His own sinless shoulders; he took the punishment for our sin. Jesus died a substitutionary death, that is He died in our place. He shed His blood; suffered the full weight of punishment for sin, so that we would not have too. He suffered hell to save us from having to go there.

Someone recently asked me, why did Jesus have to die such a horrible death? Why did He have to experience so much pain and suffering? Couldn’t He have died an easier death? The simple answer is no. He had to suffer a terrible death because sin is a terrible and horrible thing. Please understand – there is nothing good about sin. There is no such thing as a small and insignificant sin. Sin is rebellion against Almighty God. Sin is a rejection of God’s love. It is uprising against the one who has created us and loves us and sustains us.

Sin wrecked fellowship between God and man. Sin marred and ruined all that was beautiful and good. Sin is horrible. It is abhorrent. Sin is a serious matter and that is why Jesus had to bear such an awful punishment. Jesus experienced the totally of God’s wrath against sin, He literally experienced hell.

When Jesus cried out: “Eli. Eli, lama sabachtani- My God, My God why have you forsaken me?” – it was because God had left Him, He was experiencing hell.

God had forsaken Him, because He had become cursed – He was cursed with our sin. Jesus suffered this terrible punishment, so that neither you or I would ever have to look up from hell and call out “Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani – my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Please, please understand the seriousness of what we speak of today. There is no way out of hell – ever!

That is why the Word of God all the way through calls us to repentance. The Gospel is best stated in Jesus’ own words:

“⁴ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:14-18)

God so loves us that He gives us a chance to escape the wrath that is to come, to be saved from eternal death. He freely saves all who come to Him and receive His gift in faith.

We must receive this gift of salvation in faith. We need to be reconciled to God in faith. Reconciliation occurs when we admit that we are sinners. When we understand that we deserve eternal death as punishment for our sin. We trust that Jesus sacrifice, His shed blood has paid our sin debt in full.

The question to each one of you on this Good Friday is: “Do you believe? Have you trusted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. Have you repented of your sin and been washed in the blood of Jesus? Have you received the gift of life?”

If you were to die today, and stood before Almighty God, on what basis do you hope that He will allow you to enter Heaven? What will you say to Him? This is a very important question. What will you say? Will you say: I have lived a good life; I haven’t hurt anybody; I was a member of a Church. As important as these things are – they do not count toward our salvation. The only acceptable answer is: “I rely totally upon the blood of Jesus shed for me on Calvary, as full payment for my sin.”

If you haven’t really truly bowed the knee and prayed: “God be merciful to me a sinner” then please do not delay. Do it today. Jesus is waiting for you. He loves you. He wants to set you free. John writes:

“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” (1.John 1:8-10)

You see how simple it is? God’s love and mercy is so great that all we have to do is confess our sins, and then God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us come today. Good Friday is a great time to humble ourselves before Almighty God, to repent of all our sin, and to be washed clean in the blood of Jesus.

He is waiting with outstretched arms.

Come to Him.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.