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STUDIES IN PSALMS: HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN BY: C. D. COLE

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desireth truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desireth not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar," Psalms 51.

Sin is an eternal problem and if not dealt with properly results in eternal ruin. Sin is a patent fact. Its reality does not need to be

argued. Sin is a fact of experience, observation, and revelation. Sin is something I feel in my own soul; something I see in others, even in my best friends and loved ones; and something revealed in the Bible. Sin is something the policeman pursues, the physician prescribes for, conscience confesses it, God controls it, and nobody owns it. People treat sin like some people treat their trashy relatives--they ignore it and deny it.

Sin may be defined, but it cannot be explained. To explain sin is to explain it away. How the thing got started in the universe is a profound mystery. Sin does not belong here. Sin is a parasite, an interloper, an outlaw cell in the moral system.

Sin is a cheat, a deceiver, and a destroyer. It promises pleasure and pays off in pain. It promises a high life and pays off in death. Every sin is committed for profit. We see this in the first sin: Eve thought she would be profited by eating the forbidden fruit. But she was cheated. In doing wrong man never gets what he expected, or if he seems to get what he expected, he got something else that takes the joy out of what he got. There is some momentary pleasure in sin, but in the end there is death in the cup. Sin is a terrible blunder.

Sin is dangerous beyond expression and description. Sin is rebellion against a just and holy God and his law cries for just retribution. Sin is against God; crime is against human society.

Sin is universal. All have sinned. There are many queenly women, but no sinless women. There are many moral men in our sight, but no sinless men in God's sight. All are not vicious, but all are sinners.

Every man who is not past feeling feels that he is a sinner. And wherever there is a sense of sin there is some method of atonement. Man is a religious animal. Everybody has a religion because everybody has a sense or feeling of guilt to some degree. And this feeling of guilt has produced many kinds of religion, because religion is an effort to

escape guilty feelings. This is true of atheism as well as of other religions. It is the feeling of guilt that makes a man wish there were no God. In atheism the wish has been the father to the thought. The man begins by wishing there were no God and ends by thinking there is none. No person by nature is an atheist. An atheist is one who has tampered with his conscience until he believes there is no God.

Why does the heathen mother in India throw her newborn baby to the crocodiles? It is because she has a sense of God and a feeling of guilt and does this to atone for her sins. This is why the Roman Catholic goes to the confessional. He has a guilty feeling and goes to his priest and makes confession to get rid of that guilty feeling. Why does the child of God pray and confess his sins to God? Is it not in hope of getting rid of guilty feelings? This is the explanation of conscience money. Atheism is an effort to get rid of guilty feelings. Of course if a person can persuade himself to believe there is no God he can have an easy feeling, so far as guilt is concerned.

In this 51st Psalm David confesses his sins, pleads God's mercy and forgiveness, and gets rid of his guilty feelings, and is happy again.

1. He takes the right attitude towards his sin. After David committed his terrible sin with Bathsheba he went about a year trying to forget it and tried to be happy. But in spite of all his efforts he was a miserable

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REDEMPTION

BY: C. D. COLE

INTRODUCTION: Bob Ingersoll was an agnostic, not an atheist. An agnostic does not deny positively and absolutely that there is a God; he merely says no one can know whether there is a God or not. But he did deny vehemently the doctrine of forgiveness. He says: "I do not believe in forgiveness. If I rob Smith and afterward I get forgiveness, how does that help Smith? If I cover some poor girl with the leprosy of some imputed crime and she withers away like a blighted flower and afterwards I get forgiveness, how does that help her? If there is another world, we've got to settle...no forgiveness, eternal, inexorable, ever lasting justice, that is what I believe."

In other words, according to Ingersoll, if there is a God He is just and being just there is no forgiveness. He could not see how a just God could forgive crime. He was like the man who said he would like to be saved, but he could not see how God could save him without doing wrong.

Agreeing with the Bible that there is a God who is Creator and Ruler of this world, there are just four positions one can take: First, that there should be moral laws and just, exact penalties for all violations of those laws; or, second, that there should be no moral laws, which would mean anarchy; or third, that there should be moral laws with no penalties for violation. The position of the farmer who, when his son was about to be punished for breaking a law, said that he was in favor of the law but against its enforcement, which would also be anarchy; or fourth, that there should be moral laws, but relaxation of penalty.

Ingersoll took the first position, that there are moral laws with just and exact penalties for violation. This position led him to deny the doctrine of forgiveness. I take the same position but believe and rejoice in the doctrine of forgiveness.

The fourth position is the popular one today; God has his moral laws, but relaxes the penalty. This is the position of those who deny penal punishment for sin. They take Roosevelt's statement out of its context and say we have nothing to fear but fear itself. This is to say, there is no hell, and the thing people need to be saved from is the fear of hell. It must have been the

doctrine of the people of Noah's day, who denied that a flood was coming. They were saved from the fear of the flood, but the flood came any way and took them all away. But Noah was wiser, he was moved with the fear of a coming flood and prepared a way of escape.

Talk about God reducing or relaxing the penalty against sin, is to fly in the face of every known law of nature. Men talk about God tempering the wind to the shorn lamb. But when did God ever do that? Make a test of it: shear your lambs and leave them out on the bleak mountain-side with a bitter, biting wind driving from the north, and see what becomes of them. What is needed and what is the wiser thing is to provide a sheltering fold, and let the storm, God's law of nature, beat.

Talk about reducing or relaxing the penalty! Take hold of a live wire and see; fall against a revolving saw; jump in front of a speeding train; drink an ounce of carbolic acid; do any of these things and you will not live to talk about God tempering the wind to the shorn lamb. God's law whether in the moral or natural realm are exacting in their penalties.

The shepherd knows better. He wraps his cloak around the shorn lamb and lets the storm beat; the mother wraps her arms around her child and lets the storm beat on her.

In saving the sinner God does not reduce or relax the penalty of his moral laws, but "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." And this man is God's Son who met the penalty of violated law head on and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

God saves the sinner on the ground of redemption. But what is redemption? It means "to pay for," "to buy back." It is the legal satisfaction for the legal obligation.

The meaning of redemption is established by its use in the Old Testament. "*If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold,*" Leviticus 25:25. Here the word plainly means to "buy back" that which had been lost. There was the payment of a price. There was no relaxation of the debt, but an

honest, just, paying for what had been lost.

"And if a sojourner or stranger was rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him was poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him," Leviticus 25:47,48. Here again is a plain statement of what redemption is: the buying back, paying for, legal satisfaction of the legal obligation.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine," Numbers 3:11,12. *"All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the Lord, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand. And the Lord said unto Moses, number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. And thou shalt take the Levites from me (I am the Lord) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel. And Moses numbered, as the Lord commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel. And all the firstborn males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the Lord. And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them [the shekel is twenty gerahs]: And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons.*

And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites," Numbers 3:39-49.

From the passover night in Egypt the first born were set apart to God. The first-born, both of man and beast, belonged to God in a special sense. Afterward the Lord arranged to take the Levites instead of the firstborn. This exchanging man for man, or swapping the Levite for the first-born, is called redemption. Each firstborn was to be redeemed by a Levite, so that the Levite would belong to God for special service, rather than the firstborn. When both groups were counted, it was found there were 273 more of the firstborn than there were of the Levites. So these 273 had to be redeemed with something else for there were no Levites to exchange for them. They were redeemed with money. God was teaching Israel in all this the meaning of redemption; that redemption was an exact, honest, and just equivalent, without any relaxation whatever.

Now turn to the New Testament and see the redemption that we have in Christ. *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation (behavior) received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ,"* I Peter 1:18,19.

Vain conversation means vain manner of living. Weymouth: "futile habits of life." Goodspeed: "futile way of living in which ye were brought up." Williams: "futile way of living taught by your Father." Moffatt: "futile traditions of your past."

The thought is that they were redeemed from their sins. There was a just equivalent, a legal satisfaction rendered to the legal obligation they had failed to meet. No relaxation of penalty, but the bearing of the penalty by Christ.

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," Hebrews 9:12. The Old Testament high priest offered a sacrifice annually for Israel's redemption, but Christ by one offering obtained eternal redemption for us. He paid our sin debt forever.

'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Galatians 3:13. Legal satisfaction for the legal obligation.

"Our Saviour Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us

from all iniquity," Titus 2:13, 14.

Ingersoll was right in his position that if there is a God, his moral laws must be enforced, but he was wrong in denying that God forgives on the basis of redemption.

Ingersoll's position that if there is a God there can be no salvation for sinners, but everlasting, inexorable justice which means every man getting what he deserves. That is what I would believe if I did not believe there is a Saviour.

But I believe Jesus Christ paid the sin-debt for sinners, and as a sinner, I trust what He paid for the legal satisfaction of Divine justice on my behalf. And to hope for salvation on any other ground is to hope in vain.

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man. He wept so much that his health was broken. He cried for forgiveness. Have mercy upon me, O God. He did not beg for justice but for mercy. He was penitent. He did not deny or condone his sin but repented of it. A saved man does not live sinless, but he does have the right attitude towards God about his sin. Here is a vital matter. What is our attitude towards our sin? Right attitude is necessary to repentance. In repentance sins are perceived, abhorred, and abandoned in heart and desire. Repentance and faith are the two sides of an experience of grace; like the two sides of a coin. In repentance we are occupied with self and sin; in faith we are occupied with Him, Christ. In repentance sin is black; in faith Christ is precious. In repentance the sinner sees himself as a sinner; in faith he sees Christ as Saviour. In repentance the sinner steps out of himself, gives up all hope in what he can do; in faith he steps into Christ and hopes in what Christ has done.

2. David confesses his sins. He uses three words in describing his sin. One word means transgression. *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law,"* I John 3:4. This is the aspect of rebellion. Sin is a revolutionary war against the authority of God. It is an effort to dethrone God. Another word he uses means to miss the mark. Sin is failure to hit the mark, failure to reach the goal, failure to do what man was created for, the glory of

God. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,"* Romans 3:23. The other word he employs is the word iniquity. This word means that which is twisted or bent, something crooked. When we wish to describe a man as mean, we say he is crooked. Morally, man is a twisted and warped creature. His moral make up is crooked in the sight of God. In this prayer of David's he takes all the blame upon himself. He does not blame Bathsheba; he does not blame the circumstances that brought them together. He sees no sinner but himself.

A favorite way with many in getting rid of guilt is to put the blame on someone else, pass the buck. Adam put the blame on God and Eve. *"And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat,"* Genesis 3:12. *"In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge,"* Jeremiah 31:29-30.

David prays for pardon. He wants forgiveness for this sin. He prays for purity. He longs for deliverance from the very presence of sin. Our conduct will not be perfect until our heart is pure and clean. Here is a prayer I believe all of God's people continually make, and the answer is a long time coming. It will not come in this present life. But it will be answered in the world to come. Those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness shall be filled.

David prays for joy, the joy of salvation. This prayer was answered and he became a happy person. But this prayer for joy will not be completely answered until Christ comes and we awake in his likeness.

David makes a vow. *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee,"* Psalms 51:12-13.

No Christian can be an evangelist for Christ while he is working for Satan. When the hands are busy doing evil the mouth will be shut so far as witnessing for Christ is concerned.