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THE STING OF DEATH

BY: C. D. COLE

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," I Corinthians 15:56-57.

INTRODUCTION: Roger Babson says that ministers must realize they have only one real job and that is to help people spiritually. And this can be done by lovingly, faithfully and fearlessly preaching the word of God, privately and publicly, through press, from pulpit, anywhere and everywhere, in season and out of season.

The Bible is a solemn book. It deals with serious matters. It faces the sternest facts. It gives information upon eternal issues. It never dodges any issue. It tells the truth about God and man. It describes God as Creator, Ruler, Preserver and Saviour. It presents Him as almighty and holy. It sets him forth as the supreme and solitary. Sovereign of this vast universe. It describes man as a sinner before God; responsible for his conduct and in terrible danger because of his rebellion against God.

The Bible is a happy book. It has good news in it. It tells of glorious things. It tells of a salvation from all the evil and dangerous effects of sin. It tells of One who is mighty to save. It races human experience in its travel from nature to grace and from grave to glory.

The chapter from which this text is taken is about the resurrection of saints. It is a peace of victory. It is a shout of triumph as Paul, with the eye of faith sees the redeemed rising from their graves, their vile bodies fashioned like unto the glorious body of their Saviour. *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"* I Corinthians 15:55. He then faces the facts of sin and death and thanks God for victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS THE STING OF DEATH?

1. Not physical suffering. Some think it is, but there is not much physical pain in

actual death. Many who are still alive have suffered much more than some who have died. If physical pain was the sting of death, the doctor or nurse could pull it with a hypo needle. The doctor can make death easy so far as physical pain is concerned but he cannot pull the sting out of it.

2. Beasts die physically, but there is no sting in death to them. They have no moral responsibility before God.

The sting of death is sin, unforgiven sin, the thought of having to face God in judgment.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,"

Hebrews 9:27. The sinner is not through with his sins when he dies. Irvin Cobb pleaded for us to let a man's sin die with him. Well, we may, but God will not. When the lost man dies the voice of justice cries, seal up the fountain of blood, stop the stream of forgiveness; he that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still.

Dante: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

WHAT IS THE STRENGTH OF SIN?

1. The spirituality of the law. The law not only forbids overt actions, but it forbids sinful thoughts and imaginations and desires. Unrighteous anger as well as the act of murder. A lustful look as well as the overt act of adultery. A covetous thought as well as the act of theft.

2. The inflexibility of the law. The law cannot be bent to suit human imperfection. It will not abate one tittle of its stern demands. The law will not forgive; it knows no mercy. The ten commandments have a curse after them but no provision for pardon. He who lives before the law of God must be as good as was Jesus Christ and keep the law as He kept it. Law represents justice. It says obey and live, sin and die. Law links sin and punishment; not sin and mercy; mercy comes in the gospel. Law exacts punishment for every sin. It never remits a farthing of the sin debt. Let the sinner come to the house of justice to be

weighed. Justice holds a pair of scales and puts a certain sin into the balance. The sinner cries, can't you forget that? No, thunders justice, I must enforce the law. Justice puts another sin, the sin of slander or false witness. The sinner cries, Won't you overlook that? No, thunders justice, I must enforce the law and that is forbidden by the law. Then you plead that there are many sins you have not committed. Justice says, I will be fair with thee. I will not punish you for something you have not done. Justice puts another sin in the balances, and you cry for mercy. But Justice replies, I must enforce the law; you are at the wrong place if you wish mercy. Mercy has her own palace; I have nothing to do with forgiveness here. I am to uphold the law of God; mercy is at the house of Jesus Christ. Go to him if you expect mercy. Justice goes on to say, I have to exact penalty for sin; if you can find a substitute, I will accept payment from Him, and you can go free. But even at his hand I will have to exact full penalty for your sins. *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,"* Galatians 3:10.

O my dear sinner, as you sit before me tonight, listen to me. Can you hope to satisfy Justice? Can you hope to be saved by your character or conduct? If you think so, if you are so self-righteous and self-opinionated, go try it, go twist thy rope of sand; go build a pyramid of air; go build

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SATAN USING PETER TO TEMPT CHRIST

BY: C. D. COLE

"But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men," Matthew 16:23.

INTRODUCTION: The passage before us is fraught with interest and filled with lessons we need to ponder. It shows how Satan used Peter to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ. Across the pages of history moves a sinister figure who has many aliases or names. He is called Satan, hater and accuser. He is also called the devil, adversary or opponent. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,"* I Peter 5:8. *"I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully,"* I Timothy 5:14. He is called the lie just as Jesus Christ is called the truth because he is the personification of a lie. He is a liar and father of lies. He invented the principle of falsehood. He began his career on earth by lying to Eve. And she fell for his lie and brought ruin to the whole human race by getting Adam to disobey God. Satan started the sin of murder, the first murder ever committed was done by his instigation. We read that Cain was of that wicked one and slew his brother. *"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous,"* I John 3:12.

This strange person was one of God's creatures, but he usurped the prerogative of the Creator. He wanted to be like the Most High and exalt his throne above the stare of God. He belonged to the angelic order of creatures and must have been their chief and leader. And as leader he drew many of the angels after him when he broke with God.

Being expelled from heaven he wormed his way into the garden of Eden and turned man, made in the image and likeness of God, against God. He conquered the first Adam by his subtle temptation, but he failed with the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Christ withstood his temptations

and went on to the cross where he destroyed the works of the devil. Satan caused the first Adam to give up God's word, but Jesus Christ the last Adam held on to it. Jesus Christ exalted God's word. He said man is not to live by bread alone but by the word of God. And when Satan tried to get Christ to fall down and worship him, he replied, *"Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,"* Matthew 4:10. And when Satan tried to get Christ to throw himself from the pinnacle as a sensational stunt to prove that God would take care of him. *"Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,"* Matthew 4:7.

Satan has a two fold objective. He wants to slander God and ruin man. To do this he tries to keep men in his clutches and when he loses one to Christ he still tries to use him against God. Human nature has been enslaved to Satan. *"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."*

When he loses a man to Christ he loses him forever so far as causing him to perish. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,"* John 10:27.

But we have here an illustration of his using a man after he is saved. Peter was a saved man and an apostle, but Satan uses him to tempt Jesus Christ to stay away from the cross.

Satan seemed to know why Jesus Christ came into this world. He knew who he was and why and how he came. He knew he came to die on the cross and that his death would mean his defeat. And so he is determined to keep him from the cross. We can see Satan's hand in using King Herod in his effort to slay Jesus while he was a baby. And when Jesus entered upon his ministry, Satan's temptation was for the same purpose. He offered him all kingdoms of the world if he would fall down and worship him.

This would keep him from the cross. This would be a short cut to the kingdom. This would be an easy way to glory. But on that occasion Jesus said, *"Get thee hence, Satan,"* Matthew 4:10.

And he is working through Peter for the same purpose, to keep him from the cross. Jesus had been telling His disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and be killed and be raised again the third day. *"Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men,"* Matthew 16:22-23. This was soon after *"Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."* Matthew 16:16-17. This shows how the same person may be under divine influence at one time and under Satanic influence soon after.

Peter was a saved man and an apostle. He was a friend of Christ. He loved the Lord. He thought he was doing right in protesting his death. But suppose Peter had had his way, suppose there had been no cross, suppose Christ had been spared all the pain and grief he had predicted for himself. Then there would have been no salvation for Peter or any of us.

We see here a prevalent error of that hour. Even those who believed Jesus to be the Christ or Messiah, had a false conception of His Messiahship. Peter and others thought of Him as a political messiah giving earthly benefits to Jews and overthrowing Gentile nations. They thought of a conquering Messiah and not a suffering one. This was why he charged his disciples to tell no man he was the Christ. With their misconception of the Christ they would fanatically try to make him an earthly king.

It was at this time He began to instruct them about his coming death. This was six to nine months before his crucifixion. He not only shows them his fu-

ture suffering on earth, but also what others will have to suffer who follow him. The religion of Jesus Christ is not meant to insure a life of ease and pleasure here and now, but to insure an eternal future of glory in heaven. The man who tries to save everything here and now will lose everything in eternity. Just as it was a cross before the crown with Jesus Christ, it is to be the same with us. If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with him. If we take up our cross He will hand us our crown when he comes to settle with us. It is for work and suffering we are to be rewarded, and in that day all earthly badges and honors will fade away.

As I have tried to appraise my ministry, I have found some comfort in the fact that I have preached a great God and mighty Saviour.

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a house of bubbles, and see thyself in hell in spite of all thou canst do.

VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST

Under law the sinner, every sinner, faces certain and inevitable defeat, but under grace there is glorious victory. And grace is in Christ. Christ is the Champion who can meet the dragon of sin and pull his sting. Now the sting of death is unforgiven sin. *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,"* Ephesians 1:7.

1. Salvation is through satisfied law. If strength of sin is law. If law gives sin its damming power, then the law must be satisfied. If God does not enforce His law he is either a weakling or unjust. He who saves must make us right with the law.

2. Christ did this by a redemptive death. *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,"* Galatians 3:10. *"Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all,"* Galatians 4:1. Christ, surety of the better covenant, was made responsible for our sins. He bare our guilt in his own body. Sufferings of Christ on the cross was the equivalent of the second death. The believer can see his sins punished for in Christ.

3. Christ obeyed the law; we obey the Gospel. His obedience to the law made the Gospel a fact. Christ saved us by a life of obedience. He was obedient unto death.