

"YOUR SALVATION FROM SIN"

John 1:29

INTRODUCTION:

There is a small college in London that has been outstanding for training of ministers. Year after year, men graduate from its classes and serve churches in the British Empire. And in mission stations around the world. In the entrance of the hall, of the main building, there hangs an honor board recording the names of former students, who died in active missionary service overseas. You might look at, for example, the West Africa list, and search the names. And among the names you will discover graduated from college, 1872 - died 1874. Graduated from college 1883 - die 1886. And the list goes on.

Those were the days when malaria took its terrible toll on those who went to work in West Africa. Men called to the mission field knew very well - they might last 2, 5, or perhaps 10 years. Why did they not continue the work there. Why did they go? Well, the answer lies in our text today - they needed to be apart from the knowledge of Christ and the grace of God - that these people were lost and without hope. So they went to preach, to these men.

That belief is found throughout the pages of the New Testament. It is expressed in a multitude of ways. But the message is always the same.

The angels word to Joseph before Jesus birth was -- and she shall bring forth a son. And call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1:21. The word of John was this - "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God even to them that believed on his name." John 1:12.

Peter had the same word when he spoke to the Sanhedrin. "Neither is their salvation in any other, there is none other name unto Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Acts 4:12.

So the writers of the New Testament saw Jesus and they spoke of his work and his message as being one plan - salvation and redemption were to be offered and given in response to God's grace.

In that light, all the Gospel began with the great announcement. Matt. It was announced by the angel. That God is with us. The word Immanuel. Luke, the Heavenly Hosts proclaim the coming of one as a Saviour - Christ the Lord. And now John who is baptizing in the wilderness makes the same announcement.

None of the Gospels are concerned about the carpenter of Nazareth as such. None of them deal very much with him as just a man. But they serve notice to us that he is the holy one of God.

John the Baptist was one of the last of the Old Testament prophets. He was the first New Testament preacher. And one day as he stood on the banks of the River Jordan, he pointed to Jesus and he said this behold, the lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Now there is no record as to the results of that sermon, that was given. But on the next day, the same sermon was preached and the same words were used. And this time, two of John's Disciples turned and followed Jesus. Thus, identifying John, and Jesus. He boldly declared Jesus' eternal greatness - that he was no ordinary human being. V. 35-37. That he is behold the lamb of God. Which takes away the sin of the world. Jesus mission was

to deal with mankind. The deepest agony of man's heart. He accomplished that - what no one else could accomplish, by bearing away sin. The Lamb of God, who is the Son of God, was himself the perfect sacrifice for sin.

Now, it has been about 2,000 years that separate us from John the Baptist. But, the basic issue of life - continues the same. Like people in that day, we need food, clothes, and shelter. And we need the same basic inner needs in the human heart. Like the people of John's day who have wandered away from God. We need to listen to what he had to say. He said about three things that day. By the River Jordan. When he mentioned the word sin - he said something about man's condition. And then, when he mentioned the Lamb of God - he mentioned something about God's action. And then when he says, taketh away He mentioned something about God's agent.

I. MAN'S CONDITION

There is no doubt when he said - that there were sins in the world. He had reference to the human heart and condition. Now this is true in the Old Testament - in book after book - we hear the cry of men burdened with sin. And it has not changed from generation to generation. The Egyptians, the Philistines, the Persians - now all of these including the emperor of Rome were enemies of Israel from time to time. All the ages sin is the abiding problem. Both in the personal relations and in national life.

This is mentioned in the book of Psalms. And in Isaiah. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Let the wicked forsake his way. And the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord. For he will have mercy upon

him and will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:6-7. In Isaiah 53 time and time again you realize the condition of man. 'Surely, he hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet, we did esteem him stricken and smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. And with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way - and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. V. 4-6.

In the first chapters of the New Testament--man's condition is also portrayed that in the teachings of Jesus - he stressed the importance that there were things in the human heart that were sinful. The prodigal began by his unrest with outward circumstances and he did not like the atmosphere of a good home. And later, he blamed the disloyalty of his fair-weather friends. And the misfortune of a famine that had hit him and finally took him down. But in the turning point of that story, which you all know, he declared -(I have sinned.) Man's condition.

In one of the early healing miracles, Jesus searching for the root of the paralyzed man's condition, it was (not) physical. But it was (moral.) Thus he spoke the words that would release that man in Luke 5:20. Thy sins are forgiven thee.

What is the first reason for Jesus' coming! Not to save us from fear or worry. Not to deliver us from the tensions of life. Not to lift us out of the frustration of living. Well, he does all of that. But, the first thing - he came to save us from our (sins.) Man's condition.

Look at Jesus' death. When you look at him at the cross, you recognize

II. God's Action

-6-

God took action because of man's condition.
The thing that compels us in sin.

that there is no way we can reverse it. You look back on the past week in your life that has just passed. In it, everyone of us can remember something that was wrong, or that was hurtful, and we can remember some relationship that was marred. Everyone of us can recall some barrier that was erected. We cannot undo any of that. We cannot make it as though it had not happened.

The word can we take this word back that we have spoken. It cannot be unspoken and resaid. If I am sorry enough - I can make restitution. But even restitution cannot put sin right. For only forgiveness can mend a broken relationship. And if I am the wrong doer - then that forgiveness isn't mine to give. And forgiveness is always costly. So a deep part of my difficulty is what I have done, this past week. And it has become a part of me.

What we cannot do for ourselves - God does. And John announces this in his message. God takes away that which we cannot handle. He takes away the sins of the world.

So the common experience shared by man the world over, and the common experience which was transferred to animals and sacrifices, for example here is a man found that he could put a weight onto a raft and make it his carrier. Or he found that he could tame an animal and make it bear his burden. Or he discovered that he could compell another human being to carry that which he had not desire to carry himself. It was a short step from this common experience to believe that weights of other kinds could be transferred in like fashion. If the proper substitute could be found, mankind could transfer.

So man longed for someone and something to carry his inner burden for him.

And this longing stands in his heart. And then the Messiah, the son of God, came in the form of a servant and fulfilled the servant's task of bearing the burdens of many. He carried their burdens of guilt and sin. Of anxiety and infirmity. He carried the cross and layed it upon his shoulder by their indifference. And he carried the great burden of this world.

In 1906, Landslot Andrews took a verse from Isaiah 53 and translated it he had layed upon his shoulders the iniquity of us all. Ordinary things, he commented. We carry in our arms - or lift at arms end. It must be very heavy if we must put shoulders and all to it.

But Jesus says, come you, that are heavy laden and I will refresh you by loading myself. I will take it from your necks and lay it on mine.

How Christ takes away the sin of the world defies our understanding. That he does take it away is certain.

Look at our world - sins once accepted as inevitable. Other sins which used to cause people no shame, are now regarded as a break-in from the lower world. And a life grows and spreads.

Look at believers - we are frail and stumbling - but we know that Christ has broken the power of sin in our lives. There are multitudes who have shaken off unworthiness. That used to beset them - because Jesus lived and died. They have risen above. And became as an entrenched part of their lives.

They have a peace of conscience now - they did not know that before they came to Calvary. They are better, they are cleaner, they are stronger - because Christ has come. And what a difference this world would be.

There is a pattern of the Celtic cross with its variation on the theme of the cross and a circle. The cross is layed on top of the circle - with its arms reaching out beyond the circle itself. Let that be a symbol of the vicious circle of sin. And literally crossed out. The cross on Calvary declares to the world that God takes sin very seriously. And that he will stop at nothing. And John's words take us back to God's action. Behold, he says, the Lamb of God which takes away. God takes it away. God is in action.

III. GOD'S AGENT

Now John identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God. He bore the sins and carried the iniquity of man. Now, the early Christians did not ask how it had been possible to carry the burdens of others. They knew that their own guilt had been a weight too heavy to carry. They knew that they could not remove it themselves. They knew of no earthly power, or system, or right that would bring them relief. But God himself had sent his servant to take the load and carry the weight. There was a Lamb of God. Who in ways, impossible to explain, had taken mankind's unjustified rebellion.

What was John thinking about? What was in his mind when he used that title. Perhaps he was thinking about the Passover Lamb back in Egypt, - and the bondage of Israel. You recall that event - in Exodus - the lamb was slain.

And the blood protected the houses of Israel on the night when they left Egypt. It was the blood that delivered them from death and from destruction. And perhaps, this was the thing that he was thinking about.

2- But John also was the son of a priest. And he would know about the ritual of the temple and its sacrifices. Now every morning and every evening in life, a lamb was sacrificed, in the temple for the sins of the people. Ex. 29:38-42. And so long as the temple stood - this daily sacrifice was offered. Only this can deliver you from sin.

3- Another thing John might have had in mind was the great prophets who had preached on this - such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. They had pictured the lamb - both of these men had undergone suffering and sacrifice. And they dreamed that one day that a lamb would come. In fact, Isaiah said he was as a lamb led to the slaughter in 53:7.

4- A fourth thing that John might have had in mind was something that was familiar to the Jew but strange to us. Between the Old and the New Testament there were days of great struggle in which the Maccabees fought and died. And tried to get Israel's freedom. And in those days, the lamb - especially the horned lamb was the symbol of the great conqueror. The lamb stood for the conquering champion of God. Perhaps, John wasn't using a picture of gentle and helpless weakness. Rather, the picture of a conquering majesty. And power - perhaps, he was saying Jesus is the champion of God. Who will fight with sin and master it and abolish sin in one single contest.

Jesus does something about our sin. Even down through the Book of Revelation - the phrase "the Lamb of God" is used 29 times, in that book. It has become one of the most precious titles for Christ to sum up his love, sacrifice and suffering, and his triumph.

Jesus does something about our sin - there is a famous painting showing the carpenter going to the doorway of his workshop, in the evening - standing with stretched out arms to take the stiffness out of them in the evening sunshine. Behind him, on the sawdust and the shavings of the floor, cast a shadow. The picture is called "The Shadow Of The Future". Standing thus, he seems to be keeping the door of the human heart against all enemies. He did something unique for each of us. Once and for all - he had something to say about them - everyone of them.

Here then is John's word - behold the lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. // Jesus chose this way with open eyes. As a deliberate act.

Watch him for example at John's baptism at Jordan. What Jesus did that day was to identify himself with the broken, the burdened, the unfortunate. He made their trouble - his trouble. And their shame - his shame. He numbered himself with the transgressors. Watch him and the friendship he made. We see him go out and stand with Zacchaeus. And with Mary Magdalene, in the world. Quite simply and directly because he loved them. And he was not ashamed to call them brethren.

Above all, we watch him as the story nears an end. When he dies at last - it is between two thieves. All of his life he has belonged to sinners. And in

his death, he is not divided from them. It was his chosen place.

Faith's testimony is this. He loved me and gave himself for me. Now this salvation - is a great salvation - one at great cost.

Hindrex has a morality play that has a scene of Christ and Satan locked in struggle. The Christ places his right elbow on the table, and sets the challenge for a contest, and Satan smiles as he removes his coat - rolls up his sleeves. Christ, dressed in his white - looks neither strong enough nor strewd enough. But as the struggle begins, Christ says, we have loved you with an everlasting love. The second time he says it, he says we have loved you with an everlasting love. And the third time, and again and again. Each time with new emotion. The declaration is sounded. We have loved you with an everlasting love. Finally, Satan's arm is put on the table. He utters a scream and falls back from his chair. He is defeated.

Now this is the word of John - behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. God's agent.

There is a novel about Mary - Jesus' mother, on her way up to Jerusalem. With the beloved Disciple. When they reached the heights where they could see Jerusalem at a distance, the guide stopped - it was early morning. And the sun was up over the Holy City. Far away, there was the gold and the bronze, the temple gates gleaming on the hill Moriah - and they both gazed at the city. Then Jochaman spoke, woman, he said "see you what I see over Jerusalem." What do you see Jochaman asked Miriam. "I see what Moses saw in the desert. But it is

not a burning bush. It is a lamb. All the mountains on earth strain toward
Mt. Moriah - but Mt. Moriah soars above all. On it stands the house of God.
And there is the dome and the fiery altar. And the stone of Moriah. And on
the altar, God's sacrifice. And it burns with fire. And it is not consumed.
Miriam was pale - what is the sacrifice. It is the lamb of God that burns
unconsumed in perpetual fire.

Now using their imagination, may not be exactly like the Bible pictures,
but to bear away the sin of the world, is no light and easy task. Sacrifice the
fire of the cross. All of these are symbols. And Christ by the lamb of God.
But out of this - the soul can have victory. Behold, the lamb of God which takes
away the sin of the world. Behold the sin of the world is even your sin.

This is what the grace of God is all about. R. G. Lee said, the grace of
God is the unlimited and the unmerited favor given to the utterly undeserving. 11

McClarip says the word grace is a kind of shorthand. It means unconditioned,
undeserved, eternal, stopping and pardoning of God's love. Grace is something
Phillipps says is at the heart of the redeeming activity of God - reaching down.

Ever Judas might have done one of three things instead of hanging himself.
He might have attempted a rescue on the way to Calvary. And died at the point
of a Roman sphere.

2 - He might have invested his money and gained some more money. From that night

of betrayal.

3 Third, he might have gone to Calvary - and asked Jesus to forgive him. And there at the cross, mercy was waiting. Somehow, I wished that he had gone to Jesus and begged for mercy, and forgiveness. Then we would have had an eternal, glorious exhibition of what (Paul) meant. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Grace to cover all of my sin. Let the healing streams abound. Make and keep me pure within, thou of life the fountain art. Freely let me take of Thee, Spring thou up within my heart. Rise to all eternity.

*My Grand-mother passed
away this Am. - she was 59 -
thing that made her friend
was faith in this great God -*