

What does it mean, 'to be saved'?

To understand the awfulness of the character of sin

The worst obstacle to being saved is self-righteousness, - the feeling that you are good enough, by your own means, to enter in through the gate of Heaven. I believe that is the greatest obstacle to anyone being saved because they haven't been able **to understand the awfulness of the character of sin**. And I believe self-righteousness is keeping more people out of Heaven than atheism.

Last Sunday morning we began to look at the question, **What does it mean 'to be saved'?** Yes, it's very basic but very necessary to understand because the question is so important it has eternal consequences. ... And many people are under the illusion they are a Christian, but truly they have never been 'saved', never been born again. We looked last week at **The Holiness of God** and how the Bible sets it out very clearly. It tells us ...

- * **God is Separate.** He has no comparison. There is none like Him. He alone is eternal. He is the Creator. He is the Destroyer. He's the Provider. He's the Listener. His love has all the intimacy of a father for his children.
- * **God is Sinless.** This is something we can never fully understand because everything in this world has been tainted with sin and we can't take it in what sinlessness really means. But God is absolutely perfect ... holy, and all His actions/judgements are based upon His holiness.
- * **God is Sovereign.** He is in total and absolute control of the minutest details. What doesn't matter to others matters to God. Nothing happens without His permission. Nothing happens outwith His express will.

This is God, - the only God, besides Whom there is no other. He is holiness. He is the standard - the 'benchmark' - that He measures all things to and when the Bible says, **all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God** what it simply means is this ... that we have failed in measuring up to **the holiness of God**. = the 'bottom line'.

Last Sunday morning we looked at the **holiness of God**. Many a person would say, "But I could never match up to that" ... and neither you could for when you search out the **holiness of God** here's what you come up against, **the awfulness of the character of sin**. You cannot become a Christian until you begin to notice these two important diametrically-opposed points, - **the holiness of God** and **the awfulness of the character of sin**.

If ever a subject would threaten friendships ... it's the subject of preaching about sin. I know preachers who have preached about sin and their congregations have very unceremoniously requested they be removed. It's not a popular subject, - don't tell the children about it, don't tell the young people, don't tell the people 'out there' about it because you'll drive them away. But if sin is the vehicle that is carrying people to hell we've got to shout to them to 'jump out' before it's too late. ... Here is what sin does ...

Sin Excludes God

- * That is sin's agenda ... right from its very inception,
 - * Is. 14:13,14 thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.
- * It wants to keep God out ... to have nothing to do with Him; everything else is welcome ... *but not God!* Why? ... because the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
- * You see, we're bringing it down to the very basics here: it is totally natural that we don't want to have anything at all to do with God! Rebellion against God is absolutely natural.
 - * When the crowds shouted to Pilate, Jn. 19:15, *Away with him, away with him, crucify him*, they were doing what was coming natural to them.
- * Not wanting to listen to His Word is absolutely natural.
 - * As He was preaching in the synagogue at Capernaum He had followers all around Him and He preached to them a very hard message. The Bible says, Jn. 6: 61 *When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? ... 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*
- * Not wanting to come along to the church services on a Sunday and the Mid Week to pray is absolutely natural.
- * If you were to get up right now and walk out through that door and say, "I'm not listening to anymore of this talk" you would be acting in complete accordance with your nature, for the Bible says we don't want to hear and we don't want to listen.
- * When God called Isaiah and spoke with him in the temple God told him the calibre of the people he was going to face, 6:9 *Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye*

indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. It is absolutely natural that the preaching about sin is so unpopular and hardens people.

- * You've got to learn how to play a piano. You've got to learn how to read a book. You've got to learn how to drive a car ... but you don't have to learn how to sin ... *it comes naturally*.
- * ... and sin excludes God at every turn. He is not needed. He's kept out. And He is just not kept out a wee bit, - He's kept out completely. Sin excludes **the holiness of God**.
- * Sin makes us that we want to have nothing to do with Him.
 - * Ah, but you may say, when my elderly mother was seriously ill and lying in her hospital bed I prayed.
 - * Did you? Who did you pray to? Was that the holy God you were praying to or was that merely a god that was made up for the situation?
- * You see, if you are not saved and you only want to use God every now and again, you don't have free access before the Throne; you can't pick God up when you want to and drop Him down when He is no more of use, - He doesn't allow that, but you see, that's what sin makes you think because **sin excludes God**, and there is something else here too ...

Sin Expels God

- * Sin and God cannot cohabit. Where sin is, you'll not find God. Where God is, you'll not find sin. You'll not find the devil in Heaven and you'll not find God in Hell.
 - * The Bible tells us about Heaven, [Rev. 21:27](#) *there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.*
- * You see, **the awfulness of the character of sin** has such a hatred of God that it will give Him no place.
- * Can you imagine going into a brothel and finding a Gideon Bible beside the bed?
- * Can you imagine standing at the bar in the pub and being given a Gospel tract by the barmaid as she gives you your drink?
- * It's ridiculous, isn't it? Why is it ridiculous? ... Because **sin expels God**. Sin has no time for God. Sin is hell-bent on denying God access to your life.

- * Sin tries its utmost to keep God away from you. It puts up all types of barriers to keep you away from God. It creates obstacles to stop you finding Him.
- * Sin keeps God out, - it **excludes God** and **expels God**.

Sin Exchanges God

- * Here is what the Bible says, Rom 1: 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.**
- * You see, that's what sin does ... it muddies the water, it blurs the sinner's gaze, it blinds the eyes.
- * Throughout the Bible Satan has often succeeded in corrupting the people against God.
 - * He did it in the Garden of Eden.
 - * He did it at the foot of Mount Sinai when the children of Israel said to Aaron, Ex. 32:1 Up, make us gods, which shall go before us.
- * He did it when they were in Jerusalem and when they were in Babylon. He always tried to introduce sin in exchange for God.
- * ... Because you can't have both! ... Either one or the other. What does the Bible say, **No man can serve two masters: ... Ye cannot serve God and mammon.**
- * You see, sin – by its very nature - allows no place for God, and God – by His very nature – allows no place for sin. And sin caused God to look away from His Son, II Cor. 5: 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.
- * **Sin excludes God, sin expels God, sin exchanges God. ... Understanding the awfulness of the character of sin.**

CONCLUSION.

- * Is that it?! Is that where we finish? You spoke last week about **the holiness of God**, this week you laboured on about **the awfulness of the character of sin**.

- * No, it's not the finish, for if it was I would be failing in my duty and not preaching the whole counsel of God ...
- * Yes, there is a great gulf fixed between sin and God's holiness,
 - * It is so wide and so vast that Abraham had to say to the rich man in hell, [Lk. 16:26 between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.](#)
 - * It is so deep that just to look down into it would bring such a tremendous fear.
- * No pope or priest or bishop or minister or evangelist can ever bridge that gulf, for there is only [one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.](#)
- * Only Jesus! For all eternity He enjoyed the absolute **holiness of the Godhead, - the separateness, the sinlessness, the Sovereignty.** No sin, and no separation that sin brings.
- * And yet He left all that. He left it behind Him, ... the perfect holy Son of God [made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.](#)
- * The holiness of God and the sinfulness of man met at Calvary.
- * Calvary, - Jesus dying on the cross for me is the only means by which the awful abyss has been bridged.
- * But if you are not saved you've got to recognise today, - because the Bible says, [Heb. 4:7 To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts](#) - ... you've got to recognise today how holy and perfect and sinless and blameless God is, and you've got to recognise too the awfulness of your sin and the uselessness of your attempts to save yourself.
- * Jesus and *Jesus only* saves! You can't save yourself because all your futile attempts **excludes, expels** and **exchanges** the holiness of God and sets it away beyond your grasp.
- * But that's why Jesus came ... that you would repent of your sin and believe in His precious name. That's what it means to be saved. [Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.](#)
- * If you're not saved I'd love you to speak with me about these things. They are of eternal importance. You can't afford to put them off. You can't afford to avoid the issue any longer.
- * I trust that God will use His Word today to bring glory to His Name.