

ABC's of SALVATION

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

GOD'S PURGATORY

YES, I believe in purgatory." Do not let this statement shock you too much until you hear what is meant by the term purgatory.

Purgatory means a place of purgation. By the meaning of the word it should be easy to establish whether or not the Word of God teaches such a place.

I. The False Teaching Concerning Purgatory

The following words are taken from "*Faith of Our Fathers*," p. 205, by the late Cardinal Gibbons:

"Besides a place of eternal torments for the wicked and of everlasting rest for the righteous, there exists in the next life a middle state of temporary punishment, allotted for those who have died in venial sin, or those who have not satisfied the justice of God for sins already forgiven . . . Although the souls consigned to this intermediate state, commonly called purgatory, cannot help themselves, they may be aided by the suffrages of the faithful on earth. The existence of purgatory naturally implies the correlative dogma—the utility of praying for the dead—for souls consigned to this middle state have not reached the term of their journey. They are still exiles from heaven and fit subjects for divine clemency."

It is needless to tell the student of the Word of God that there is not a single sentence in the entire Bible to support such a dogma. If it be without scriptural support then it is false, for "**To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them**" (Isaiah 8:20).

II. The True Teaching Concerning Purgatory

In Hebrews 1:3 it is written, "**Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.**"

There has been a purgation of sins.

The place where this purgation took place was Calvary—hence Calvary is God’s Purgatory. This is the only purgatory known in the Word of God. Of this purgatory it has well been said that eternity past knew no other future for He Was “**The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**” (Revelation 13:8), and that the eternity of the future will know no other past for the saints in glory shall sing, “**Thou wast slain, and hath redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation**” (Revelation 5:9).

III. The Method of Purgation

It is vicarious and substitutionary. Note the words in Hebrews 1:3, “**By himself purged our sins.**”

Some men rant and rave about the doctrine of the vicarious and substitutionary death of Christ. They talk as if it is something so abnormal, so distressingly odd, so wildly eccentric, so singular and solitary, that only a fool will accept it.

We quote one of these men who held a high place in the ranks of a well-known denomination: “If Jesus bore my guilt, He did an immoral thing. The whole substitutionary theory of atonement is immoral at the core . . . I have read somewhere a story that God sent His angel one night and killed the firstborn of Egypt. If I believed God would do a thing like that, I would curse Him.”

Yet there are but few places on this earth toward which this man could have looked and not have seen substitution. Men toil in shops and on farms that little mouths may be fed and little bodies hunger not. The battlefields of the earth are filled with the wounded and dying in order that others might live and enjoy freedom. Do not misunderstand me. I am not remotely suggesting that Christ died a martyr’s death like men die on battlefields, but I am trying to show that substitution is as old as the race.

IV. Purgation a Divine Edict

In Hebrews 9:22 it is written, “**Without shedding of blood is no remission.**” This truth runs from Genesis to the Revelation. In Genesis 3:21 it is written, “**Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.**”

This clearly indicates that there was shedding of blood. Of Abel and his offering it is written, “**And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering**” (Genesis 4:4). To the sulking, sinful Cain the Lord said, “**If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door**” (Genesis 4:7). The Word is somewhat ambiguous. In the Hebrew the emphasis is on the first *well* and the second *if*, while the verb *lieth* is masculine. The word sin is rendered *sin offering* in Exodus 30:10 and other places. The real meaning of the verse is, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well a sin offering (a male) lieth at the door.”

Thus on the threshold of divine revelation, in type, symbol, and word we find the decree that runs entirely through the Scriptures; namely, “**Without shedding of blood is no remission.**”

V. This Edict Is Universal in Scope

In Romans 3:23 it is written, **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”** Note the word all. It does not say some, many, or most—but all. This includes the king on the throne and the servant behind the mill (Exodus 11:5). Someone has well said, “It includes the up-and-outer as well as the down-and-outer.”

For this universal plight there is a universal remedy, for immediately following the words, **“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”** it is written, **“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”** (Romans 3:24-26).

VI. A Perpetual Decree

Some truths are dispensational in character and apply only to a certain age, while others are perpetual, and, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, **“change not.”** It was true the day the serpent deceived the woman within the confines of Eden that **“without shedding of blood is no remission.”** It is still true after six thousand years of human history; and should the world remain for another six thousand years, it will still remain true. In I Corinthians 15:3, Paul declares the gospel to be the **“good news”** that **“Christ has died for our sins according to the scriptures.”** Be it man or angel from heaven, who preaches any **“other gospel,”** now or ten thousand years from now, he is under the curse of God (Galatians 1:8).

VII. This Purgation Effective

It is written in Hebrews 1:3, **“When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”** Again in Hebrews 10:11, 12 it is written, **“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”**

Note the words sat down found in both these quotations. The old Tabernacle had altars, a table, a lampstand, and other articles of equipment, but no chair is ever mentioned. The reason is obvious—the priests could never sit down, for their work was never ended. Christ’s work was effective and complete—hence it is said, **“He sat down.”**

At the Parliament of Religions, convened in Chicago in connection with the Columbian Exposition in 1893, the Oriental religions were represented by their most subtle and fluent exponents.

After all the humanly devised cults had been presented by their ablest defenders, Dr. Joseph Cook, of Boston, arose to present the cause of Christianity.

He said, “Here is Lady Macbeth’s hand. There are blood stains upon it—the blood of the foully murdered King Duncan. See her perambulating the dark corridors of the dismal castle by candlelight.

She pauses at intervals to examine her blood smeared hand. She rubs it betimes exclaiming: ‘Out, damned spot! out! I say!’ But the stain remains. Then she soliloquizes thus: ‘Can all the perfumes of Arabia ever sweeten this little hand? No! No! No!’”

Dr. Cook then challenged all religious exponents present to state what cleansing efficacy was to be found in the religions they were so anxious to propagate, but there was no response. The challenge that Dr. Cook presented to the religious cults that day has never been met by any religion of this world, for only “**The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**” (I John 1:7).

Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,
All our sins were on Thee laid;
By almighty Love anointed,
Thou hast full atonement made.
All Thy people are forgiven
Through the virtue of Thy blood;
Opened is the gate of heaven:
Peace is made for us with God.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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