

salvation is **forever**

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SALVATION IS FOREVER

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To my parents

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Preface

WHEN I was a teenager, I believed in Jesus Christ and received Him into my life as my Lord and Savior (John 1:12; Rom. 10:9, 10). At the time, I thought that I was already a Christian. In fact, I had previously given my testimony to the board of deacons, was baptized, and was received into the membership of Bethel Baptist Church in Erie, Pennsylvania. However, when I attended an evangelistic meeting at our church on a Saturday night, I came under great conviction of the Holy Spirit through the message of Percy Crawford. At the invitation, I walked down the aisle to the front of the auditorium and there trusted Christ as my Savior.

I date my personal salvation to that event, and yet, in subsequent years, I came to doubt the reality of that spiritual experience. Did I *really* trust Him? Was Satan deceiving me? Did he want me to think that I was a Christian when I really wasn't? Did I just know the verses about salvation? These doubts continued even after I entered Baptist Bible Seminary to prepare for the ministry. It was during my college years that I read an impact article titled "By Faith, Not by Feeling." Finally I saw the problem. I was too focused on my inner thoughts and feelings. Rather I needed to take God at His Word (1 John 5:9–13).

In my fifty years of ministry, I have discovered that others have gone through the same doubts that I experienced. As I preached, taught, and counseled, I sensed the need to produce a book that dealt with the issues of faith, salvation, eternal security, and assurance. This volume is still as relevant today as it was when it was first published. God has blessed the history of the book with many printings in English and with translations into Spanish, German, and Romanian.

In recent years, Pentecostalism and the rise of the charismatic movement have contributed to the controversy over the nature of genuine salvation. The theology of these groups, for the most part, teaches that a believer can lose his salvation. Their influence through television and books has brought much confusion to the evangelical world.

In the late 1980s, a series of three books rocked evangelical churches and schools: *The Gospel According to Jesus* (John MacArthur, Jr.), *Absolutely Free!* (Zane C. Hodges), and *So Great Salvation* (Charles C. Ryrie). At issue was the essence of saving faith. Does faith alone in Christ save? Is repentance an essential ingredient of saving faith? Such debate between respected evangelical leaders and scholars also brought confusion.

The cooperation of evangelicals with Roman Catholics in recent days has also stirred up the debate over Biblical justification, sanctification, and saving faith. Does a devout Catholic believe in the same way as a committed evangelical? How do faith and sacramental works merge in the mind of the average Catholic?

It is my prayer that this book will cause many Christians to enjoy the salvation and redemptive peace provided by Jesus Christ. Too many have never experienced the joy of their salvation because they have lived with the fear that they could lose it. To serve God out of gratitude and to love Who He is and what He has done is much better than to serve Him out of anxiety.

If this book should be read by an unbeliever, I pray that the reader will see his lost, condemned position before God and receive God's gracious provision of eternal salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

What Does It Mean to Be Lost?

JESUS said that He came into the world to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). He spoke about the *lost* sheep, the *lost* coin, and the *lost* son.

The apostle Paul wrote that the gospel was hidden to those who are lost (2 Cor. 4:3). Why was the term *lost* used? What does it mean to be lost?

This is one of the Biblical terms used to describe man's position, or standing, before God prior to personal salvation. It is God's assessment of the natural man. It implies that man is in a desperate condition and that he can do nothing to rescue himself from his dilemma. The unsaved man is unaware of his spiritual lostness until he is convicted of his moral plight by the Holy Spirit. However, the unusual paradox is the fact that many Christians themselves do not understand the lost condition from which they have been saved.

This first chapter will introduce the reader to the Biblical reasons why a person who is not a Christian stands condemned before God as a guilty, lost sinner. When one understands fully what it means to be lost, then he will comprehend more thoughtfully and thankfully the scope of his salvation provided in Christ. Then he can move on to a consideration of the next questions: Can a Christian lose his

salvation? Can he again be lost and guilty before God? Because, if a person can lose his salvation, he must return *exactly* and *completely* to that position he once had before God; not just to a *partial lost* condition, but to a *total* lost position. So now we shall consider the question, Why are people guilty and lost before God?

Mankind's Rejection of Divine Revelation

First, mankind's rejection of divine revelation condemns them. Divine revelation is truth that God has revealed or communicated to men. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2). Ever since creation, God has revealed truth about Himself and His will at different times in various ways. Truth is not just to be learned but also to be done. God holds men accountable for what He has given to them, and all men of all ages have received some form of divine revelation.

Natural revelation

God has revealed Himself through nature, or creation. David sang, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). He later wrote, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14). The stars, the planets, the sky, the hills and mountains, the rivers and oceans, and our very physical bodies were designed to reveal truth about God's character and being. Only the fool would deny the existence of God as he studies the world through the telescope or the microscope (Ps. 14:1). Paul stated that God's existence, His power, and His intelligence can be known by every man through nature (Rom. 1:19, 20). However, because of their sinful bias, men "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Although the intricacies of inner and outer space argue for the existence of an intelligent designer, a moral personality, some people refuse to admit this. They would rather believe that the world just evolved by impersonal forces from embryonic

beginnings in a primeval chemical sea. To admit the existence of a God Who created them would imply moral responsibility to that God, and this they refuse to do. They suppress the truth because they do not want to change their behavior. They justify their decision, however, in the guise of intellectual honesty and scientific observation. This person—the college graduate, the PhD, the scientist—is “without excuse” before God (Rom. 1:20) because he has rejected what God has designed to be perceived by the human mind.

The heathen in developing nations are in the same moral dilemma as the sophisticated American intellectual. He does not deny the existence of deity when he looks at nature; he multiplies his gods. He changes “the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (Rom. 1:23). He does not deny God; he just doesn’t worship Him! He worships the creation rather than the Creator. He distorts truth. He falls down before a piece of wood, the sun, a dumb animal, and sometimes even before a fellow human being who is just as sinful as he is. For this action, God holds the heathen accountable. Because they live from the cradle to the grave without acknowledging the true God of nature, they stand condemned and will spend eternity separated from God. Man has played the fool by denying or perverting the truth of God revealed in nature.

God has also revealed truth about Himself through man’s personality. God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26, 27); therefore, the image of God in man must reflect some truth about the nature and character of God. This image is still retained by man, even after the fall of Adam and the entrance of sin into the world (Gen. 9:6). What is this image? It cannot refer to man’s physical body, because God is a spirit being (John 4:24). It must refer to man’s immaterial being—to his soul or spirit—to the fact that he is a moral personality. Like God, he has intellect, emotion, and will. Also, like God and unlike the animal creation, he has a sense of moral oughtness, a conscience, an indicator of right and wrong.

As man looks into his inner self, either casually or through a psychological study, he is aware that he is a moral being and that he is a created being. Where does this awareness come from? Where did the idea of good and evil originate? Man *should* come to the conclusion that a moral God has created him and that he is morally responsible to this God for his wrong attitudes and actions. He *should* fall down before this holy God and ask for forgiveness for his sin, but he does not. Why? Because he rejects his moral responsibility for his deeds. He either puts the blame on someone else or justifies his actions (Rom. 2:15).

Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Pity the serpent! It had no one to blame except God, and that is exactly what some people do today. They blame God for their sin. Some excuse their sin by saying they are not as bad as others. Today, some new moralists justify immorality outside of the marriage bond by claiming that there is sometimes more love outside of marriage than within marriage. Do two wrongs make a right? Never. Man rejects the truth of God's holy personality when he finds excuses for his unrighteousness. For this action, God holds him accountable (Rom. 2:1).

Special revelation

So far we have looked at the divine truth revealed to the uncivilized heathen and to the civilized pagan. To natural revelation (creation and man's personality) God has added specific data in the form of special revelation. This special revelation is the Bible, God's written Word. All Scripture is the inspired, or the "breathed out," Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). It is what God would *say* directly to man if He were using this method of revelation today. The Bible did not originate within the thought processes of men, but God directed men by the Holy Spirit to write what He wanted to communicate in human language, words capable of being understood by man (2 Pet. 1:20, 21).

This was the advantage that the Jewish nation enjoyed. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2). God gave His moral commandments in written form through Moses (Exod. 20),

His law—Genesis to Deuteronomy—and His Word through Jewish prophets after the pattern of Moses (Deut. 18:15–22). Moses wrote, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

Israel knew more about God and His revealed will than the ungodly Gentile nations that surrounded her, but she rejected this extra truth. She broke the law of God at its very inception; she refused to repent under the preaching ministry of the prophets; and in conclusion, she rejected the very Messiah toward whom the Old Testament pointed (Luke 24:44; John 5:46). The Biblical principle is that to “whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48). God gave more truth to Israel; therefore, Israel was more accountable to God. This is why Jesus said it would be *more* tolerable for Sodom and Tyre in the day of judgment than for the Jewish cities to which He ministered (Matt. 11:20–24). The Old Testament cities had rejected the messages of holy men, but the cities of Judea and of Galilee had rejected the very person of God Himself.

Today most people within Christendom and even throughout the world fall under the same indictment as ancient Israel. The New Testament, containing the significance of Christ’s person and redemptive work, combined with the Old Testament, gives to man God’s total revelation of Himself and His program for the ages. The Bible is available practically everywhere. It is there to be read, to be understood, and to be believed. But what does modern man do? He regards it as just another piece of ancient literature, containing primitive religious concepts. He feels that it is not worth his time to investigate its teachings. When he does read, he rejects what he finds—the revelation of his sinful character and of God’s holy being. He does not receive “the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him” (1 Cor. 2:14). God holds men responsible for their rejection of His Word.

For people to be saved, they must receive by faith the Christ of the gospel message—the One Who died for their sins according to

the Scriptures, was buried, and Who rose again according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1–4). When a person comes under the hearing of the gospel message, he then becomes accountable for his moral response. He can either accept or reject, but he cannot remain neutral. If he rejects, God holds him guilty. If he regards the message of the Cross as foolishness, then he is numbered among those who are perishing (1 Cor. 1:18). “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Rejection of the gospel and of Christ brings additional condemnation to the unsaved person.

All people are guilty before God because they have rejected divine revelation, no matter what form it has taken—creation, the image of God in man, the Bible, or the written and oral message of the Cross.

Mankind’s Relationship to the World

There is a second basic reason why people are lost and guilty. Their relationship to the world condemns them. All unsaved people are citizens of this world. As “world patriots,” they love this world system and are opposed to all who are not part of it. A Christian has been chosen out of the world by Christ (John 15:19). He has also been given out of the world by the Father to the Son (John 17:6). True to his loyalty, the worldling hates and persecutes the Christian because the system to which he belongs hated and persecuted Christ two thousand years ago (John 15:18, 19). The world loves its own, but a Christian is no longer a member of the world family. Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). This world is unalterably opposed to Christ’s kingdom, the “other world,” of which each Christian is a citizen. This is not an East-West conflict but a Heaven-earth opposition. God loves, but the world hates.

The unsaved man is also a world conformist. He walks “according to the course of this world” (Eph. 2:2). His pleasures are world-

centered; his values are world-oriented; his ambitions are world-directed. He is not God-centered or directed. He is dominated by the philosophy of this age. His dress, his diet, and his desires all reflect the bias and prejudice of his world conformity. He has no desire to bring God into the center of his experience. A friend of the world is naturally the enemy of God (James 4:4). As long as a person remains a world citizen and conformer, he is lost.

Mankind's Relationship to Satan

Third, people's relationship to Satan condemns them. Contrary to popular opinion, Satan is a real, personal being, not a Halloween-fabricated character. He was a created cherub (Ezek. 28:12–19) who sinned against God. His wisdom and beauty led to pride and his subsequent downfall (Isa. 14:12–17). Since his fall, he has become the archenemy of God and of His program. One day he will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will be tormented forever and ever (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). In his opposition to God, Satan sustains a definite relationship to the world of mankind. Through Satan's temptation, Eve ate of his forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–6). He has been active in the world of human affairs ever since. How has man been affected by this sinful being?

Satan as father

Every sinner is actually a "spiritual" child of the Devil. He manifests this by not doing righteousness and by not loving Christians (1 John 3:10). Spiritual children of God are just the opposite in position and in practice. They do righteousness and they love their brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus told His Jewish opponents that if God had been their Father, they would have loved Him because He came from God (John 8:42). He added:

Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is

no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:43, 44).

Like begets like. All unsaved people do not love Christ with their total being because Satan, their father, does not love Him. They do not respond to the divine Word, they hate or murder, they lie—all because of their spiritual, satanic nature. Just as Satan stands condemned for his character and actions, so his children are condemned.

Satan as ruler

Not only is Satan a father to sinners, but Paul calls him a ruler. Read Paul's description of his conversion experience: "Who [Christ] hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Christians are now in Christ's spiritual kingdom; they were once under Satan's rule. The extent of satanic dominion is little known today, yet Jesus called him "the prince of this world" (John 12:31). Paul called him "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) and "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). The Christian daily wrestles "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). When Satan offered Christ the kingdoms of this world, Jesus did not doubt his ability to give them (Matt. 4:8, 9). These passages clearly show that Satan rules over a world of fallen angels and sinful men. They are in his kingdom. They not only obey him, they worship him.

The unsaved person is also under the direct control of the Devil. According to Paul, the unsaved person walks not only in conformity to the world but also "according to the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). He is a "Satan-conformist!" He walks according to satanic goals, likes, and dislikes. Paul added the thought that the Devil is a "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). The Greek idea behind "worketh" is "energy." Satan energizes the unsaved. He works in and through them to accomplish his will.

From this passage, it is easy to see that no unsaved man has a totally free will. An anti-Christ will is steering the car of his life.

Just as a child sits in the lap of his father, “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). The phrase “in wickedness” can better be translated “in the wicked one.” The world is in the lap of the wicked one, or the Devil. The impression conveyed is that the Devil is in control of the world system and that the world cannot do anything about its predicament.

Satan as deceiver

Finally, Satan blinds the minds and spiritual perception of lost people. Paul said that “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4). When man’s physical eyes are blinded, he cannot see the natural light of the *sun*; when man’s mind, or spiritual eyes, are blinded, he cannot see the spiritual light of the *Son*. Jesus is the light of men. He shines in a world of spiritual darkness, but blinded men do not receive Him (John 1:4, 5).

Most people do not believe that they are spiritually blind. That is exactly what Satan wants them to believe. That is part of his plan of deception. This is what Jesus meant in His evaluation of the Pharisees: “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:41). When men think that they can understand spiritual truth but they really cannot, then Satan has succeeded in blinding them. When men admit their spiritual blindness, then they have taken the first step. Paul said that unsaved Gentiles walk “in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:17, 18). Satan’s goal is to keep sinners from the life of God. He does this by dulling their spiritual perception. Have you ever wondered why so many PhDs reject the simple truth of Scripture? For the same reason

the illiterate reject it: Satan has cast a cloud over their hearts. Just as God created light to dispel the darkness (Gen. 1:3), so God today must create spiritual light to dispel man's moral blindness (2 Cor. 4:6).

Mankind's Relationship to Sin

Fourth, a person is condemned because of his relationship to sin. *Sin!* A forgotten word in the vocabulary of modern man. He has invented different terms to take its place: mistakes, hangups, ills, etc. But God calls it sin. Sin is any lack of conformity to the character and will of God. In many ways, man has come short of God's holy standard.

Sinful in Adam

The Bible declares that man sinned in Adam. Paul wrote, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). We know that all men die physically, but when did all men sin? When did the infant who dies sin? This is a hard theological question, but there is a Scriptural answer. When Adam sinned, every person (potentially present in the genetic makeup of Adam) sinned. When Adam sinned, you sinned in him. When Adam sinned, I sinned in him. God reckons Adam's sin to be your sin and my sin.

An illustration is in order here. The book of Hebrews argues that the priesthood of Melchisedec is greater than that of Levi. To prove it, the writer refers to the time when Abraham, the great-grandfather of Levi, paid tithes to Melchisedec. Here is the conclusion of the argument: "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" (Heb. 7:9, 10). Levi, yet unborn, paid tithes in Abraham. So we, yet unborn, sinned in Adam. We participated personally, yet unconsciously, in Adam's sin. If we had been in that garden instead of Adam, we would have done the very same thing that Adam and Eve did. We are just like Adam, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

God declared the penalty of sin even before Adam disobeyed the divine will: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). When Adam sinned, he died spiritually and he began to die physically. The processes of corruption and mortality set into his body. His state of spiritual death became immediately evident by his shame for his nakedness, by his hiding from God, and by his excusing of his sin (Gen. 3:7–13). Every person born into the world participates not only in Adam’s sin but also in his punishment. He is born dead in sins, and the body of the infant is destined to disease and to death.

Adam became guilty before God because of his sin of rebellion; so we are guilty before God because we were in Adam. Consider these verses carefully:

For if through the offence of one many be dead, . . . for the judgment was by one to condemnation. . . . For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; . . . Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation. . . . For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners (Rom. 5:15–19).

This is a difficult truth but a Scriptural one. One reason why men are lost is that they have sinned in Adam.

Sinful by inherited nature

People are also guilty because they have inherited a sin nature from their ancestral father, Adam. The principle “after its kind” is indelibly written into God’s created world. Birds beget birds, dogs beget dogs, cats beget cats, and sinful men beget sinful men. No children were born to Adam and Eve before their disobedience, but after the Fall, the famous brothers Cain and Abel were born. Were they born with a sin nature? Did they have an inbred propensity to rebel? Cain was jealous and angry at Abel and finally killed him. Proof enough! Adam’s sons were begotten in his likeness and image (Gen. 5:3). They

were no different than he was—no worse, no better—in their position before God. Adam sinned; so they sinned. Adam died; so they died.

The presence of the sin nature has thoroughly corrupted man's total being. His personality—intellect, emotion, and will—is turned away from God and toward sin. His understanding is “darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:18). His heart “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). His will is enslaved to sin, uncleanness, and iniquity (Rom. 6:17–19).

David was aware of man's inherited sinfulness when he wrote, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5). Unaware of contemporary, sophisticated genetic knowledge, David nevertheless traced his sin problem to his fetal state. He was born in sin. God gave this evaluation of man after the Flood: “For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth” (Gen. 8:21). A person does not have to be taught to sin; he knows how intuitively.

Sinful in thought and deed

People are also guilty because of their sinful acts and attitudes. These acts and attitudes are the natural expression, or fruit, of the sin nature. An apple tree is an apple tree long before it produces apples because it has the nature of an apple tree. So it is with man. He is a sinner in nature long before he puts forth the blooms of his sinful attitudes and the fruit of his sinful deeds. But just as the apple tree manifests its nature, so the sinner will manifest his. He does it in two ways: by his thoughts and emotions and by his willful decisions.

All men have broken the moral law of God in these two areas. No one has kept it in his heart or done it with his hand. The sinful act is the manifestation of the sinful attitude. God holds man responsible for both. Jesus said,

That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts,

covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:20–23).

Jesus also said that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). The scribes and Pharisees refused to recognize these concepts. To them, the sin was in the act but not in the thought. Jesus corrected their faulty thinking in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5—7). According to Christ, sin went beyond the act to the attitude.

Adultery could be committed in the mind as well on the bed. Anger with malice breaks the sixth commandment as much as plunging a knife into the heart of an enemy. One sin involves the mind; the other involves both the mind and the body; but they are both sin. The aftereffects of the action may be greater than those of the intent, but they are still both sin. Man is a sinner, both in his soul and in his body, and God holds him responsible for this.

According to Paul, all unsaved men are under sin (Rom. 3:9). All men before God and before men do have equality. They are equally under the penalty of sin, equally under the power of sin, and equally under the presence of sin. They are equally lost! Sin dominates them completely—their past, their present, and their future. Paul said that he was “sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14). Sin owned and controlled him; he was its slave. To the Galatians he wrote, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (Gal. 3:22). A person does not see himself in this desperate predicament. He believes that he can control the problems, the weaknesses, and the sins of himself and of society. He does not know that he is actually under the ironfisted rule of sin. When he does see himself as being under sin, he is then a candidate for salvation.

Sinful in entirety

In summary, the Bible depicts man as being morally and spiritually depraved. What does depravity mean? Negatively, it does not

mean that man is as bad as he could be. There are sinners who have sinned more and others who have sinned less. There are moral sinners and there are immoral sinners, but they are both sinners before God. No person has ever put into practice the full potential of his sin nature. The restraint of the Holy Spirit, the influence of Christians in the world as salt and light, and the purposes of God have prevented him from doing so. Depravity does not mean that a person does not have any knowledge of God. It does not mean that he does not appreciate the quality of goodness or that he does not do good. Jesus said that evil men could give good gifts unto their children (Luke 11:13).

Positively, depravity means that there is nothing in man that will merit God's approval. There is nothing a person can do to gain acceptance before God. This is God's estimation of man; it is not man's evaluation of himself. It means that in man there is a total absence of holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

The sense of depravity is hard to communicate. Whenever men hear the word "depraved," they immediately think of a corrupt pervert or a sin-cursed soul. However, depravity refers to man's position before God, not his practice. He is *as bad off* as he can be, but he is not necessarily *as bad as* he can be. Depravity is true of man's total being—his intellect, his emotion, and his will. There is nothing that he can think, feel, or do that will produce God's type of righteousness within his life. This is true of every person who has ever lived.

Depravity is seen in Job's question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4). Eliphaz's question is similar: "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" (Job 15:14). David knew that he was "shapen in iniquity" (Ps. 51:5), and Solomon observed that there was not a just man upon earth (Eccles. 7:20).

Man is both dead and dying. His spirit is dead and his body is dying. He is like the criminal on death row, condemned to die and also afflicted with terminal cancer. He needs a double remedy or a double life. He must be delivered from both the guilt of sin and the

corruption of sin's effects upon his body. He is incapable of doing anything to produce this deliverance. Only God can provide the type of redemption that he needs.

Mankind's Relationship to God

Fifth and finally, a person is condemned because of his relationship to God. Man could be condemned simply on the basis of his inhumanity to man, his dissipation of his own person, and his pollution of his environment. (Note how ecologists refer to the *sin* of spoiling our biosphere—our air, earth, and water.) Ultimately, however, man stands condemned because of his position before a holy God.

Most people profess to believe in some kind of a god, but it is a god of their own making or one that has been passed down to them through tradition. The Bible actually describes the unsaved man as one who is “without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). He is without God in the fullest sense of the term *God*. He has no claim on God. There is not a single bit of the presence of the genuine, living God in his life. He is truly ungodly or godless in that there is no vital relationship between himself and the God Who created this universe and Who provided redemption through Christ.

Paul wrote that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). Jude said that one of the characteristics of the unregenerate is “having not the Spirit” (Jude 19). There are two groups of people in the world: those who have the Holy Spirit (the saved) and those who have not the Spirit (the unsaved). There are no other possibilities. You cannot have a saved person without the Spirit, and you cannot have an unsaved person who has the Spirit.

John said, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). Paul added that the unsaved man is “without Christ” (Eph. 2:12). In Christ is life, the very life of God (John 1:4). If a person does not have Jesus Christ dwelling within his life, he is an unsaved person. Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by

me” (John 14:6). This means that the atheist, the animist, the Muslim, the Buddhist, and the Christian religionist cannot have access to God. He must come only through Christ.

Man is simply guilty before God. He has broken the moral law of God, he knows it, and he is liable. Instead of arguing with God about his sinful violations, the unregenerate person should admit his guilt (Rom. 3:20). Man has no basis of appeal before God. He cannot blame his situation on heredity or environment. He must blame himself. Read Paul’s description of the guilty man:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:10–18).

Is it any wonder men are guilty before God? If man cried out for justice, he would receive eternal condemnation. That is what his position and practice deserve. Instead he should appeal for mercy and grace. He should fall on his knees, asking for forgiveness out of a repentant heart.

God did not give the law so man could keep it and thereby gain eternal life (Gal. 3:21). The law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12); but because of man’s weakness or inability, it could not produce righteousness (Rom. 8:3). The law was given so that man could understand God’s holy character, recognize his own sinful being, and place his faith in God’s provision for his salvation. The law was a mirror so that man could see his moral despair and call upon God for his cleansing.

The Bible places every non-Christian under the wrath of God. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not

the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). This is the position of the unregenerate man; however, he will not experience God’s wrath until after death in Hades, or Hell, and later in the Lake of Fire (Luke 16:19–31; Rev. 20:11–15). Until then, the wrath of God hangs over him as the sword of Damocles. Only the thread of a heartbeat keeps him from fully experiencing it. Deliverance is possible, but it must come before physical death. After death, it is too late. Deliverance comes through believing in Christ. You either have everlasting life within you or the wrath of God upon you.

The unsaved person is also without hope (Eph. 2:12). What a sad picture! In the hospital, those are heart-wrenching words. When the doctor looks at you and says, “We have given up hope,” what pain and remorse that announcement brings. Men have lived on hope. They have survived in concentration or POW camps because they hoped that rescue or release was imminent. But when hope dies or is absent, man can sink to new lows of mental, emotional, and spiritual depression. Man without God is also without hope, both in this life and after death.

Hope is part of faith. Paul wrote, “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:24, 25).

The Thessalonians were marked by their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope (1 Thess. 1:3). They had a living hope. They had put their faith in Jesus Christ, the One Who was crucified, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into God’s presence, and Who could come at any moment to take them likewise into God’s Heaven. The unsaved do not have this hope (1 Thess. 4:13). God sees them in total despair.

As far as God is concerned, man is lost. He is morally lost in an infinite forest with no spiritual compass. It is a forest in a land of perpetual darkness. He could grope for an eternity and never find a way out. Man cannot rescue himself. God must penetrate that forest and

save him, and that is exactly what Christ did. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Man is lost, and only God through Christ can find him.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has demonstrated why people are unsaved. They are condemned because they have rejected divine revelation. The relationships that they sustain to the world, to Satan, to sin, and to God also make them guilty. Every unsaved person is marked by the Biblical characteristics set forth in this chapter, whether he is aware of them or not. Why was this chapter written, and why did I make it the first chapter? Because if a person could lose his spiritual deliverance through Christ, he would have to return fully to his former position and practice. In order to be guilty before God once more, he would have to return to the complete state of the lost man who has never been saved.

When a person says that he has lost his salvation, ask him why. He will usually refer to a terrible sin that he has committed or to a cold feeling in his heart. But is he doing what the Bible says condemns a person? Does he reject the revelation of God in nature, in his conscience, or in the Bible? Is he still blinded to spiritual truth? These are not true of the genuine Christian, even if he is the worst backslider who has ever lived. It is impossible for a man, once saved, to duplicate his spiritual state of lostness for which he was condemned.

The question of the psalmist should make more sense now: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (Ps. 8:4). The vastness of the universe makes man seem insignificant. The lostness of man makes him appear undesirable to a holy God. But God *is* mindful of man. God has visited man in grace and redemption. In the next chapter we shall see what a remarkable salvation God has provided at the cross and given us through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Are contemporary Christians concerned about evangelism and missions? Support your answer.

2. How do contemporary Christians show their belief—or lack of belief—that people without Christ are lost?

3. How do unsaved people practice conformity to the world? What is their worldview? Compare the worldview of a Christian and a non-Christian.

4. Do people today believe in a literal, personal Satan and in demons? How can we talk to unsaved people about Satan?

5. How has the definition of “sin” been redefined in our day? What role do social and political correctness and tolerance play in this definition?