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The Heart Of The Gospel

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Forgiveness of sin is the heart of the gospel. Election is the beginning of the gospel. Eternal glory with Christ is the end of the gospel. But peace with God through sins forgiven is the beating heart of gospel grace.

When forgiveness is little valued the gospel is held in low esteem. If sin appears as a small thing, a matter of no real gravity or consequence, then the gospel will not be treasured in God's church and God's testimony will be diminished in the estimation of sinful men.

This is the curse of our day. Men and women have little sense of sin, no dread of judgment and no felt need for forgiveness. We call good evil and evil good, morality is stood on its head and we have become so inured to our own evil nature we don't even notice it. Well did the Lord Jesus say "blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness". Those unconcerned about their lack of righteousness are doubly cursed, first with a soul steeped in sin and second with a mind too dark to discern their perilous state. We are sinking slowly into hell and we are ignorant and careless of our dilemma.

Now, I do not doubt most of you who read these words will heartily agree. After all, Scripture is its own witness. "And", writes the Apostle John, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Yet, I fear many of us are more content in our sin than we realise, even within the professing church. Many are lulled into false security by preachers who declare peace when there is none. We accept the applause of ministers who themselves set the standard for heaven and eulogize the 'successful' dead, though they die in their sins.

We are like the wicked king in Daniel 4:4 who declared, "I ... was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace". We are self-possessed, self-satisfied, self-assured. We have lost sight of the holiness of God and therefore measure ourselves wrongly. We are ignorant of the true state of our soul and the miracle of forgiveness is mere talk. We fail to see ourselves, like Nebuchadnezzar, as the beasts we really are.

The achievement of the atonement was Christ taking away the sins of God's elect people, a remnant and a little flock. Never forget, salvation is God's work, not the will of man. There are millions in the world today who believe Jesus took away their sins on the cross. In their heads they will it and want it to be so. They have the theory, even the theology, but they have never experienced the reality. They have not known sins forgiven nor have they yet discovered the depth of their own depraved nature. They have not,

like the prodigal son, come to themselves and consequently can never come to Christ. They are content to remain in their pigsty of self-righteous effort with an aerosol and a filthy rag. Hear this, there are adulterers, thieves, brawlers, drunkards and extortioners in glory today, who have been forgiven all of their sin, but there are no self-righteous people in heaven. And there never will be.

Those who have been forgiven much love much, says our Saviour. They love the Lord Jesus Christ. They love His family, His people. They love to be where the Lord is well-spoken of, to fellowship with the church, to worship His glorious name. They love to serve Him, and sacrifice for Him which is really no sacrifice at all. They are men and women who know what it means to be sinners, and know what it means to be forgiven of their sin. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

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