

ON WHAT ARE YOU BUILDING?

What we have just seen regarding faith structures is important, but our present question is yet more so, because if not on the rock foundation, Jesus Christ, all our faith is vain and all our hope delusive.

To believe that Mohammed once lived and died on earth does not constitute us Mohammedans, nor give a basis for faith and hope of a future life; neither does the simple belief that Jesus once lived and died on earth constitute us Christians, nor give a basis of faith or hope of a future life. But the belief that Jesus died as our Redeemer – "died for our sins according to the Scriptures," "gave himself a ransom for all;" that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, and that by his stripes we are healed," does constitute us Christians and give a firm foundation for faith that our sins are cancelled, and that in his due time all may be released from sin's penalty – death.

Some build on right doing as a basis of hope that God will grant them eternal life. These build not on the Rock, Christ Jesus, but upon their own works. Of this class were the Jews, who sought to justify themselves. But Paul assures us that they had not a good foundation; for "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Rom. 3:20.)

Others build their hope of salvation on the love of God. They feel sure that because God is very pitiful and of tender mercy, therefore he will ultimately, eternally save every one from death. Such seem to forget that God had the same love for mankind for the past six thousand years, yet he has permitted mankind to go down lower and lower into misery and death. We suggest to these that if God has so long kept love subservient to justice, and never overruled his original sentence of death, their hope rests on a sandy foundation; for his word declares "With him is no variableness, neither shadow

of turning" and "He will by no means clear the guilty." (James 1:17; Exod. 34:7.) Such are not Christians because they build hope and faith on the love of God and not on the only foundation, CHRIST JESUS. The LOVE of God provided the foundation, but the love of God is not the foundation of Christian faith.

Others build on the justice of God and boldly declare that God is bound by principles of justice, to save all men out of Adamic death. Their argument is that God placed man in his present condition of sin and misery and death, and that in justice to his creatures he must restore them. To those who thus reason and build their hopes of future life on God's JUSTICE, we would suggest that if this reasoning is correct, the many Scriptures which tell us that by grace (God's favor) we are saved, are all untrue, because if He is compelled to save men on principles of justice, then salvation is not of grace, but of justice. We suggest further, that if God is bound in justice to save all men out of death, it is proper to infer that God has **[R429 : page 3]** been unjust toward man for six thousand years. The inference, then, would be that God will sooner or later be compelled in justice to change his methods and do right – do justly by his creatures.

You never said it thus? We presume not. Perhaps you never thought of the God-dishonoring conclusions to which your false, though seemingly plausible, premise would lead. If you had, doubtless you would not be building your hopes on God's justice – outside of his plan to redeem through Christ Jesus – for if he has been unjust for six thousand years, he might continue to be unjust indefinitely.

None of these theories are scriptural, hence none of them are proper foundations for faith, and any building reared thereon is doomed to destruction. We ask the question, Can those who build on these sandy foundations be properly termed Christians? Is not a

Christian one whose hopes of future life are built solely and only, on the rock foundation which God has laid – Jesus Christ? "Thus saith Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." (Isa. 28:16.)

Paul also declares the foundation of all Christian faith, saying, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received (first of all), how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3.) In the two preceding verses Paul tells us that this was the Gospel which he preached, which they had received, and by which they might reckon themselves saved. This is not all of the Gospel – good tidings – no, there is much more, but it all comes as a consequence of this fundamental or foundation truth; and without this faith in Jesus as our Redeemer, who died and gave his life a ransom for our lives, which were forfeited through Adam's sin, we must see that we are still guilty and condemned before God's law and could have no scriptural grounds for expecting future life.

It is in vain that any tell us that they are building on Christ because they acknowledge Him as a leader and noble pattern. All men – yes, and devils too must acknowledge the grandeur and perfectness of Jesus' life; all must admit that he is a noble example, but to acknowledge Jesus as the foundation of faith in a future life, is to recognize the fact that all men are sinners, and as such JUSTLY condemned to death, and that Jesus is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and that thus, by paying the penalty of man's sins – death – he procured for all a release from death, a right to life. He justifies them, or makes them worthy of life, which in His due time he will give them.

The plan of God, looked at from the standpoint of the inspired Word of God, recognizes the impartially just trial of Adam, his deliberate violation of God's just and easy requirement, and the justice of enforcing the penalty which God had threatened, viz.,

DEATH (not life in torment, but a loss of life totally). "In the day that thou eatest thereof – dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 2:17, Margin). God's foreknowledge of the consequence of Adam's sin cannot be urged against the justice of his trial, as the trial was the same and had the same results, as though God had not foreknown its result.

God is not responsible for all the mental and physical imperfections of our race. These are traceable as results of sin to Adam their progenitor. Here is a thought not generally recognized, that God creates only perfect beings such as Adam was before sin; and all fallen, mentally and physically imperfect men and women, are not God's creation, but the offspring of the fallen Adam. These imperfections, therefore, are not chargeable to God, but to Adam's sin. All die, therefore, as a result of Adam's unrighteousness and not of God's injustice. If, then, God was just in condemning Adam, and in no way responsible to Adam's offspring, it must have been as Scripture states, "By God's grace (unmerited favor) we are saved." Yes, while we were in just condemnation as enemies and sinners, God so loved and pitied us that he gave his Son, that he "by the grace of God should taste death for every man." To this agree the words of Scripture – 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:12,17,19, and 11:32,33. If, then, the Scriptures are true, the theory that Jehovah has dealt unjustly by the race in condemning all to death, and the argument that he is bound in justice to restore them to life, falls.

Looking from the standpoint of divine revelation, instead of purely human reasoning, we see that while love is a prominent factor in all God's plans and an element of the divine nature, yet his foreknowledge and omnipotence make it unnecessary for his love to come into conflict with his justice. God having justly condemned man as unworthy of life, love could not step in and reverse the decision and set the prisoner free without first satisfying the claims of justice. Should God do so we should properly consider him

changeable; and not only so, but we should all see that either the first or the last decision was unjust, for if the first decision was just, then the reversing of it was unjust, and if the last decision be just, the first must have been unjust. God is just and true; in him is no variableness; He will by no means clear the guilty. The guilt of all our race was laid on Jesus, and the claims of justice were satisfied in his sacrifice. If we say we have no sin (and hence no need of a Saviour to redeem from the consequence of it – death), "we make him a liar," for he declares, "There is none righteous; no, not one."

When all were in this condition of sin and condemnation in which we could neither help ourselves nor each other, because all being from Adam were under the same condemnation, then God's love carried out a plan (already conceived) by which he could clear the guilty race and restore them to life and at the same time do it justly. He so loved the sinner, whom he had justly **[R429 : page 4]** condemned, that he gave his Son that he should taste death (our penalty) for every man; that he should be a propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins (the Church's), and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2.) Thus God's love and wisdom, operating in harmony with his justice, succeed in clearing the guilty without any injustice. Thus only can God be just and the justifier of sinners who accept of the ransom "when brought to a full knowledge of it." (Rom. 3:26; 1 Tim. 2:4.) An earthly judge, before whom a criminal had been convicted and justly sentenced, could not justly set the prisoner free, nor declare him guiltless in the eyes of the law. But if some one came forward and paid the imposed penalty for the prisoner, the Judge could be just in justifying (declaring right in the eyes of the law) him whom he had formerly been just in condemning.

We feel satisfied that few have seen into the "depths of the riches both of the knowledge and wisdom of God." In wisdom and love all were judged according to the one representative whose

example nearly all would undoubtedly have followed if they had been individually tried. If each of the one hundred and forty billions of human beings estimated to have been born into the world had been individually tried, and had yielded and been condemned as Adam was, it would have required as many perfect human beings to die for them, and thus pay their penalty and redeem them.

But looking at it from God's statement, we see a depth of divine wisdom and economy in the plan adopted – the condemning of all through one man's disobedience, that he might have mercy on all through the sacrifice of another one as a sin offering. Note the force of the following Scriptures from this standpoint and their meaninglessness when otherwise viewed: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous....Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, by a sacrifice (see margin) condemned sin in the flesh." "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God: how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!... Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever." (1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:18-21; 8:3; 11:32-36.)

In conclusion: On what are you building your faith, my brother, my sister? On the sands of men's opinions and theories, or on the one rock foundation which God himself has laid? – Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" – who "died for our sins."

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

"His oath, his cov'nant and His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

"On Christ the Solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

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IT IS a good deal better to live holy than to talk about it. We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody that it does. The light will be its own witness. Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining – they just shine.

– Moody.
