

Overcoming Obstacles To God's Mercy

Jesus told a story about a servant that owed his master 10,000 talents and could not pay back this massive sum (Mt18:21-27). The master forgave him the entire debt. What a tremendous master! Of course, the master represents God and the indebted servant describes us, sinners who can't erase one sin much less all of them. God's loving mercy overwhelms the sinner's ability to understand it. Obstacles exist for those who long for and need God's forgiveness. These hindrances endanger the grace and mercy we long for.

By David Hartsell

Sin offends God! It destroys man's relationship with the Lord. He grieves over the great chasm of sin that separates all men from him. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet.3:9). Mankind can regain their close fellowship with God but only through a special type of faith that involves genuine repentance and commitment to The Lord. Without this faith we are lost (Mk.16:15-16 and Lk.13:3-5). The saving message seems simple, and intellectually it is. However, man must be able to see himself as a sinner, hopeless and helpless, without God. Until one does he can't humbly turn to The Lord. Too many proud people try to deny or excuse their sins, only to later confess them in some general way. King Saul demonstrates this pattern perfectly. The Lord instructs Saul to fight and completely destroy the wicked Amalekites with their flocks and herds. Instead, Saul returns with Agag, Amalek's king, and the best of the animals. When confronted by Samuel regarding his disobedience Saul first

said he did obey, next he excuses his actions by blaming the people, and finally he says, "I have sinned" (1 Sam.15:19-30). One of the greatest obstacles to truly turning to God is human pride. Unless and until one can see himself as a sinner he is lost!

Sinful attitudes and activities also obstruct people from becoming true followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus lays down simple but strict requirements for discipleship. "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk.9:23). Two things can prevent us from tasting of God's mercy. The force of habit causes people to do many things without thinking them through: drinking alcohol, bad language, or inappropriate literature. Habit feels comfortable and easily can sweep us away from our Savior. Habit practiced too long becomes character. Also, pleasure can enslave people. Obviously the works of the flesh often controls one's heart and diverts them away from God's saving mercy (Rom.1:18-21). Sometimes fleshly sins involve transgressions with our heart and our mouth, these are just as condemning (Gal.5:19-21 and Eph.4:24-29).

Salvation by God's mercy is free but it places great obligations on us. To be children of God means first seeing ourselves for what we are, "sinners." Only then can we humble ourselves to allow our Lord to save us from the evil one (1 Pet.5:8).



The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

For Times Out Of Joint

By Fanning Yater Tant



Thoughts to Ponder

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:15)

There is a seething unrest going on in the denominational world today. G. Aiken Taylor, editor of The Presbyterian Journal, says, "Many churchmen believe it is inevitable that denominations, as we have known them, shall pass from the scene. They expect them to be replaced, if the Lord delays his return, by something new - perhaps something as radically different as denominations were when they first appeared." Denominations, of course, are relatively new. Excluding the Catholic denominations (Greek, Roman, and Old) the others have been around only a few hundred years; the oldest of the, Lutheran, this very year will observe the 450th anniversary of Luther's nailing his historic 95 theses to the door of the old castle church in Wittenberg.

Human dignity, freedom, equality for all men are truly fine and worthy goals; but they are not the goals of the Christian nor of the Lord's church. That goal is spiritual, not secular; it is eternal, not temporal; it has to do with the souls of men rather than their stomachs. "Christ Jesus came to save sinners," said Paul.

some "mission", or social reform, or world project matters little. As of right now there are a whole covey of emerging "forms" — Campus Crusade for Christ, Christian's Business Men's Committee International, Inter - Varsity, the Gideons, the Full Gospel Movement, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, International Christian Leadership, and perhaps a dozen others of lesser note. These emerging movements have one thing in common ---they stress social action rather than doctrinal belief; they put the

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The dedicated Christian has only a passing interest in these vast upheavals in the denominational world. Whatever the "form" of the new churches may be; whether they group around

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| Lisa Carter (Luke's mother) | Jesse Godwin (Troy's father and Mac's grandfather) | Virginia Box (Sarah Norman's grandmother) | Louise Pack (Anna and Christopher's grandmother) |
| Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters) | Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier) | David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father) | Jamin Hymel (Chad's son) |
| Terri Moore (Joey's aunt) | Artina Hunt (Esther's friend's sister) | Betty Bradford | Hazel Gilliland and Sherry Carroll (Toni's relatives) |
| Ricky Tucker (Tyler's cousin) | Ermogene Laxson (Sara Lail's grandmother) | Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother) | William Smith (Ken Sullivan's brother) |
| Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father) | Bernice Martin (Will Harris' great-grandmother) | Sasha Rozier (Makenzie Reynolds' cousin) | Eva Jean Cavender (Matt's grandmother) |
| John M. Rhodes and Bonnie Rhodes Kirkley (Toni Herd's family) | Howard Vaughan (Mary Ann's Granddad) | Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephew) | Maria Aragon (Liseth's Mother) |

- July Birthdays**
 2-Josh Gooch
 8-David DeFoor
 11-Chase Winslett
 11-Madi White
 11-Clay Morris
 11-Kelsey Gallahar
 12-Tyler Tucker
 14-Laurel Jerkins
 14-Megan Ryan
 15-Bradley Seymore
 15-Winston Atnip
 16-Katie Martin
 19-Ben Holcomb
 19-Jay Borden
 21-Tori Luther
 22-Kate Fortenberry
 24-Haley Gay
 25-Betty Bradford
 25-Yvette Rouse
 26-Brandon Hester
 27-Tiffany Green
 28-Jacob Bradshaw
 29-Hayden Phillips

News and Notes

- ☒ - The ladies' class this week is Thursday at 7:00 p.m. at Savannah Spohn's house. We will be studying Esther.
- ☒ - Please pray for Buddy Scalf, Ada Owens uncle who lives in West Virginia.
- ☒ - The Prattmont church has a meeting Sun-Fri, with Phil Arnold preaching.
- ☒ - Lisa Carter, Luke's mom, had a great repost after her latest scan!
- ☒ - Please remember James Luther, a relative of Toni Herd.
- ☒ - Remember Ryan Hasty and Ben Holcomb in you prayers as they leave on Wed. for South Korea to preach the gospel!
- ☒ - Tonight will be a singing night!
- ☒ - Jessica and Kevin Anderson request the prayers of the congregation as they will be adopting a child in November. Please pray for the birth mother, Sonia and the baby.
- ☒ - Larry will be in a meeting at the Capshaw church in Athens through Wednesday,

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 Walker Davis
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 Larry Rouse
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday
 Bible Class9:30 AM
 Worship10:20 AM
 Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
 Bible Classes.....7:00 PM
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emphasis on this world rather than on the world to come; and they stress fellowship and unitedness by minimizing doctrinal beliefs and convictions. "Coffee house" ministries and "inner city" projects (among the slums and ghettos) loom large in their thinking. Personal salvation from the power and consequences of sin is important only as it motivates a man to get off his booze and earn a decent living for his wife and children.

We are being told that the frightful wars of the past quarter-century, together with the prospect of even more terrifying and destructive holocausts in the years ahead have so thrown our times "out of joint" that we must seek a vital NEW form for the church. Well, if by "the church" they mean traditional denominationalism, then we are all for it. The denominations as we know them are relatively stagnant. In spite of all their tremendous sums of yearly expenditure, and in spite of many thousands of trained and professional full-time workers, they are hard put to it to maintain themselves. In contrast with this look at the new Japanese religion, Soka Gakkai, the fastest growing religion in the world. In 1945 it counted 20,000 adherents. Today it claims 15 million! But "Christianity" in Japan for more than a hundred years numbers all its adherents, of every stripe and hue of denominational affiliation, at less than one-half million.

Certainly the times are out of joint. They always have been. Christianity was born arid bred for a world out of joint. It was specifically designed in the mind of God for a chaotic, sinful, confused and confusing world. Does someone think that the gospel of Christ is suited for a quiet and undisturbed civilization? Look at the Roman world into which it first came! Violence was

there quite as hideous as in the gas chambers of Nazi Germany; death was as frightful and horrible to the victim of Rome's wrath as he screamed in agony from the crucifix (one emperor crucified more than 2,000 on a single occasion) as to the terrified Japanese working man who perished in the blinding flash at Hiroshima.

May God hasten the day, indeed, when all denominationalism, and all denominations will have perished from the earth. The mission of the devoted Christian is precisely what it has always been, and always will be—to win lost souls to Jesus Christ that they may be saved from sin. Human dignity, freedom, equality for all men are truly fine and worthy goals; but they are not the goals of the Christian nor of the Lord's church. That goal is spiritual, not secular; it is eternal, not temporal; it has to do with the souls of men rather than their stomachs. "Christ Jesus came to save sinners," said Paul. That was his mission, and is the mission of his church. It always will be. Let others concern themselves with social aims and gains; the follower of Christ is interested in heaven for himself and for as many others as he can win. It matters little to him whether the times are "out of joint" or not. He is interested in the sinner, not in his society. And the sinner is always out of joint; he remains that way until from the heart he obeys the gospel of Christ. No matter how progressive, affluent, or cultured his society, he is lost and ruined without Christ. And no matter how chaotic and horrible his civilization, if he has Christ he is a "new creature". His life is happy and fulfilled in service of his King!

Does anybody see anything hard or difficult about this? This is what Paul calls "the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ." In Him the sinner finds salvation — both present and future.

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A Few Ominous "Isms"

By Irvin Himmel

An "ism" is a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory. Peculiar presumptions and well-defined views are commonly dubbed as "isms."

Christians are confronted with a wide range of "isms," and many of these threaten our spiritual welfare. In this article I mention a few of them so that we may guard against them.

Materialism

There are religious people who suppose that man is wholly material or physical in his nature. They therefore see death as cessation of existence. They are like the ancient Sadducees (**Acts 23:8**). There is more to man than physical life (**Matt. 10:28**). Others hold to materialism in a different sense. They know that man has a soul or spirit made in the image of God, but they over emphasize material things. They permit the material to crowd out the spiritual. Jesus taught that temporal things are not the most important (**Matt. 6:33; 16:26**).

Sensualism

Commercial advertisers, entertainers, movie producers, many book and magazine publishers, TV programmers, many video makers, and others are promoting sensualism. The public is being flooded with pictures, words, and suggestions that develop and encourage lewdness, licentiousness, sexual permissiveness, carnality, fleshly lusts, and wantonness. Moral impurity is flaunted, paraded, and exhibited openly. The Bible includes as works of the flesh "immorality, impurity, sensuality" (**Gal. 5:19, NASB**), warning that "those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Pharisaim

The members of the ancient Jewish sect known as the Pharisees were noted for hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and insincerity. A splendid example of their attitude is found in the parable in **Luke 18:9-14**. Jesus exposed their wickedness in **Matthew 23**. Many today are given to Pharisaim. They are sanctimonious in their own eyes. They see themselves as righteous and virtually all others as less than righteous. Some of the most severe denunciations delivered by Christ were directed against the pharisaical outlook. It is much easier to see fault in others than to admit one's own sins.

Liberalism

Some take very broad views politically and socially. The same is true in religious matters. Many indulge in practices which the New Testament does not allow. They throw off the restraints imposed by apostolic authority. Some are so tolerant and unrestricted as to fellowship people who do not believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, deny the inspiration of the Scriptures, and do not believe that Jesus arose bodily from the grave. Some are not that liberal, but they accept sprinkling and pouring for baptism, think one church is as good as another, and sanction denominationalism. Others take undue liberties with the word of God on such subjects as worship, the organization and work of the church, and women's role in the church.

Credalism

A creed is a brief authoritative formula of religious belief or a set of guiding principles. Human creeds have been the occasion of division and discord through the centuries. Pioneer preachers in America spoke and wrote against such creeds, urging that we have no creed but Christ and no guide but the Bible. There is today a subtle tendency among well-meaning brethren to revive credalism. Questionnaires circulated as tests of faithfulness carry a creedal flavor. There is a danger here that must not be overlooked. The New Testament is all-sufficient as a measure of soundness. The Lord will judge us by his word.

Defeatism

There are people who convince themselves that failure is inevitable. Ten of twelve spies took this attitude in **Numbers 13 and 14**. God had promised Israel the land of Canaan. The defeatism of the ten spies spread to the whole congregation. God punished them with forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Some Christians constantly focus on difficulties and dangers. They see a mirage and throw on the breaks. They are full of pessimism. Weak faith prompts them to suppose that we are whipped before we ever start, no matter how worthy the undertaking. But victory belongs to God's people who persevere (**Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:57,58**).

Let us not be deterred by "isms" such as those mentioned in this article.

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