

# Excuses Excuses

Thinking about Adam and Eve, while it should be easy to relate to them, it is hard to sympathize with them:

- God placed them in Paradise,
- He told Adam not to do one simple thing: “And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’” Ge 2:16-17
- Adam and Eve were deceived by the devil, banished from Paradise and caused serious negative consequences for themselves and everyone who followed them.

What about us?

- We live in a relative paradise compared to most other people of the world today and throughout history.
- We are alerted, by Jesus, of the single sin (eerily similar to the single sin of Adam and Eve) that will keep us from the eternal true Paradise: “I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.” Mt 12:31
- Most people, today and throughout history, are deceived by the devil and lost as Jesus tells us: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Mt 7:13-14

Or, the Positive – How to be Saved:

- Jesus simply and clearly tells us: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Mt 18:3-4
- Humility in action? Not surprisingly, since it is so important, Jesus tells us in His first recorded public words: “From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” Mt 4:17

And this is confirmed in Martin Luther’s First and Third, of his 95, theses:

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent” Mt 4:17, he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
3. Yet it does not mean solely inner repentance; such inner repentance is worthless unless it produces various outward mortification of the flesh.

- “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Pr 3:34, Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5 And just as repentance is “willed for the entire life,” humility is as well.
- “It is by grace you have been saved.” Eph 2:5 & 2:8 With a developing and deepening discipline of humility and repentance being the necessary foundation of an authentic Christian life, as is the necessary Grace to save us each day – this is the promise of God’s Gospel, that “he has become my salvation.” Ex 15:2, Ps 118:14, Ps 118:21 & Isa 12:2

O LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you.

Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress. Isa 33:2

And limiting God’s salvation to the religious “part” of life (whatever that means) is a false religion and salvation – we must “grow up in” our salvation <sup>1Pe 2:1</sup>, “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” <sup>2Pe 3:17</sup> as we mature in our faith (as evidence of real, Holy Spirit, given Grace-faith).

- Then what – what are we saved for? “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Eph 2:11
- “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Phil 1:6

This is God’s one-way plan of salvation, the small gate and narrow road that leads to life. And this cycle of Grace never ends as long as we live:

“For from Christ’s fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” Jn 1:16 ESV

This is God’s “circle” of salvation that a Christian will complete time and again throughout life in what is called “sanctification,” the on-going narrow road of God’s continuing salvation necessary from the time of every Christian’s new birth until earthly death. This is the only basis for a genuine assurance of God’s salvation.

## Darkness

Yes, only one sin will derail us: if we are deceived, in pride, foolishly believing we can handle all that life and death “throw at us” and, as a result, blaspheme the Holy Spirit by refusing His offered help if we simply:

- Change and become like little children . . . and humble ourselves . . .” Mt 18:3-4
- “Repent . . .” recognizing “the kingdom of heaven is near.” Mt 4:17
- Accept “God’s grace given to the humble.” Pr 3:34, Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5
- “For it is by grace you have been saved.” Eph 2:5 & 2:8
- “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Eph 2:11
- Remembering, “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Phil 1:6

- “For from Christ’s fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” Jn 1:16

“I don’t need to humble myself, repent, require God’s Grace, do any particular good works He supposedly prepared in advance for me to do. I am good enough as I am. I can and am doing all I need to do to please God! I can see other people may need His help, but I don’t have to make any excuses for who I am and what I have done.” This is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Or, maybe, “I know I need God’s help and I am confident He will save me anyway – He understands I simply don’t have the time, I don’t like to read the *Bible*, don’t understand what I am reading . . . I rely on others I trust to explain what I need to do – they all seem to confirm I am saved . . .” This is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Or even depending on: “I attend church regularly, pray some, read the *Bible* off and on, take communion, give money faithfully to church . . . This is certainly an authentic Christian isn’t it? In other words, while we/they could always do more, wouldn’t we expect this would be minimally adequate to please God?” No! Trusting in what we do is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Only depending on what He does for us is a basis for God’s salvation!

“For like a poisonous breath over the fields, like a mass of locusts over Egypt, so the swarm of excuses is a general plague, a ruinous infection among men, that eats off the sprouts of the Eternal.” Kierkegaard

## The Really Good News – the Glimmer of Light in Darkness?

It is never too late to come to Christ until the clock of our personal life strikes midnight and time for us ends. He showed this is true, in His dying on the cross, by telling one of the two thieves crucified with Him, lost to that point, in his last hours:

“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” Lk 23:43

## Way back?

Just what in slightly different words Jesus said above:

You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble.”

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. Jas 4:4-10 THIS is the Christian model of

being “in Christ” (an all-important term used 89 times in the *New Testament*) and living “according to the Spirit.” <sup>Ro 8:4</sup>

## So, How Can I Know I Am Saved? Can I Know?

None of us will have an excuse, at death and our final one “open book,” pass/fail, test because God has told us the answer in advance (do not blaspheme the Holy Spirit):

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. <sup>2Co 13:5-6</sup>

We cannot depend on what anyone else tells us, we must examine ourselves because only we know if “Christ Jesus is in” us. This is the sure and only sign that we are saved for the Holy Spirit (this being Christ Jesus in us) is given when we are saved. And all are saved who have not blasphemed the Holy Spirit by rejecting His every offer to us until the clock of our personal life strikes midnight and time ends to come to Christ; meaning the time of self-examination and repentance ends, the real and final one-question pass/fail test is given, judgment arrives and eternity begins.

## No Excuse!

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>Jn 15:22</sup>

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. <sup>Ro 1:18-20</sup>

The ones who will be put to shame are the people who, in life, blasphemed God’s graciously offered life-giving Holy Spirit. We have no legitimate excuse for not accepting God’s offer of forgiveness for of life’s SIN of sins, a rejection of His only hope and help for achieving eternal life with Him.