

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# MORE THAN REDEMPTION: THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

From eternity, God planned human salvation, choosing His people in Christ "from the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Jesus Christ, God's slain Lamb, died for "those whose names have been written" in His "scroll of life from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8; 17:8). Peter says, "He was foreknown, indeed, before the foundation of a world" to be the Saviour whose "valuable blood" would be "shed like the blood of a spotless and unblemished lamb" (1 Pet. 1:19, 20). And it was for the benefit of the very same persons that God prepared eternal blessings through His Son "from the foundation of the world"<sup>1</sup> (Matt. 25:24). Clearly, then, salvation was no afterthought; it was not a last-ditch attempt by God to repair a world that had gone wrong. Instead, salvation is God's way of raising man higher than at creation (we shall look at this in some depth later in the chapter); He planned man's redemption from the beginning ("from the foundation of the [or a] world").

One must not picture God frustrated over sin, sitting in the heavens wringing His hands, wondering how He might make the best of a bad situation, suddenly striking upon the idea of sending His Son to die for guilty sinners. No, exactly not that if it has any meaning at all, the phrase, "from the foundation of the world" has exactly the opposite import: salvation was in the picture from the beginning. All along, God intended to demonstrate His love through sending Christ. Whatever else he sees in salvation, it is important, therefore, for the counsellor to recognize salvation as a part of the *eternal* purpose of God, Who determined that His Son should die. This determination was made not *after* sin came into the world, but before the world's foundation before there was a man to sin or a world in which he would sin.

Many questions are generated over this realization, but there is one point I wish to make right off through this salvation God planned to bring about *more* than through creation, which also means more than redemption. By this route He determined to elevate man *above* the state in which he was created. As we shall have occasion to observe later, this fact is all-important to the counsellor's stance toward his counselee and his problems. And, speaking of problems, in passing let me suggest that the whole problem of evil (as it has been called by philosophers) takes on a different hue and perspective in the light of this eternal dimension there is a plan behind history, and it involves God's glory through grace to man. History is not haphazard; in it God is doing something for the human race. The purpose of this grace is to lift man far beyond his original state.

What God the Father planned from eternity, Christ His incarnate Son accomplished in space and time in human history. Redemption was not suprahistorical, but an event of this world's history (so much a part of it, indeed, that it set our calendars for us!). Jesus Christ, Who was God manifest in the flesh (note, *flesh* means body), accomplished God's purposes. He Himself said, "I came down from heaven not to do what I want, but to do what the One Who sent Me wants" (John 6:38). And what was it that the Father wanted Him to do? Listen to the next verse: "... here is what the One Who sent Me wants: that I lose none of all those He gave Me, but that I shall resurrect them on the last day" (John 6:39). God purposed, through redemption, to form a people who (like Jesus) were resurrected from the dead. That He accomplished His purpose, He Himself maintained in prayer: "I glorified You on the earth by completing the work that You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). Christ's death was no tragic, abortive termination to God's plans, but the very climax of them. So, when Jesus cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30), those words were neither a sigh of relief nor a groan of despair they were a shout of victory. He was saying, "I've done it! I have defeated the enemy; I have redeemed God's own!"

The Christian counsellor, therefore, sees all of prophetic history from Genesis 3:15 on the whole sacrificial system in which thousands of animals were slain, all the types and figures of the O.T. period, etc. not as some sort of human groping by Israel after the true God and the proper way to worship Him, but (rather) as an essential part of God's design in "leading many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10). He Who was the "Leader of their salvation" did that God's entire program required to assure their safe arrival.

That God's purpose included an eternal, divine program, and not merely the ultimate ends of salvation, is clear from the details of prophecy (*when* and *where* Christ would be born, minister and die, specifically *what* He would do and what would happen to Him, etc.) that were given in the O.T. Scriptures. Moreover, He continually spoke about that program: "My hour hasn't yet come" (John 2:4; cf. 7:30), "the hour has come" (John 12:23), "this hour" (John 12:27), "My time is not yet at hand" (John 7:6), etc. And it must never be forgotten that Christ came "in the fullness of time" i.e., right on schedule (Gal. 4:4).<sup>2</sup> Salvation was no haphazard, makeshift, do-the-

best-you-can-with-a-bad-situation affair, as some think. Instead, salvation was a carefully thought-through, well-planned and precisely executed program.

But the program for man's salvation was not merely planned and executed by God the Father and God the Son, it is also activated in each individual life by God the Holy Spirit. We must recognize that sinners, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), can never genuinely say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 12:3). In fact, they cannot even "welcome" or "know" (i.e., savingly believe or understand) the message of salvation apart from the new life that the Spirit gives. That is because the gospel "must be investigated spiritually" (I Cor. 2:14). That is to say, only those who have the Spirit of Christ at work in them can explore Christ's claims in such a way that they will repent and believe the gospel. Father, Son and Spirit, then, all participate in man's salvation. Salvation was designed by the Father, effectuated by the Son and applied by the Spirit. Salvation is a Trinitarian work.

Now there are many other ways to view and discuss salvation. For instance, we might speak about the three tenses of salvation:

PAST: We have been saved from the penalty of sin (justification).

PRESENT: We are being saved from the power of sin (sanctification).

FUTURE: We shall be saved from the presence of sin (glorification).

Or, it is possible to divide salvation into its divine side (what God does atonement, regeneration, etc.) and its human side (what God's Spirit enables us to do repent, believe, etc.). Or, we also might think of the objective elements in salvation (the atonement, justification, etc.) and the subjective ones (regeneration, faith, etc.).

I mention the three formulations above not because they exhaust the possibilities, but because I want to make it as clear as a storm-swept sky that since it is the central message and concern of the Scriptures, there is much to be said about God's redemption of man. Salvation is multidimensional; it may be approached from any one (or any combination) of its facets. (The three approaches noted are but illustrative of this fact.) So, then, all that might be said, won't be said here!

How, then, shall we approach the Bible's teaching about salvation in its relationships to counselling? To begin with, it is important to restate the fact that salvation is what makes Christian counselling possible; it is the foundation (or basis) for all counselling. This is the positive side of the coin mentioned earlier about the impossibility of counselling unbelievers.<sup>3</sup> When doing true counselling, i.e., working with saved persons to enable them to make changes, at a level of depth that pleases God it is possible to solve any true counselling problem (i.e., any problem involving love for God and one's neighbour). Such assurance stems from the fact that all the resources necessary for change are available in the Word and by the Spirit.

No counselling system that is based on some other foundation can begin to offer what Christian counselling offers. How tragic, then, to see Christians giving out counsel based on other foundations composed of purely human ideas and resources. They offer little hope and have no good reason to believe that they will succeed; yet (sadly) many Christians lap up (and follow) such advice.

For several reasons, the hope that Christian counsellors offer is unlike hope given by others. First, this hope is based on the unfailing promises of God that He has recorded in the Scriptures. That makes all the difference. How different from basing one's hope on let us say Freud!

Secondly, every command in the Scriptures implies hope: God never tells His children to do anything that He fails to supply both the directions and the power to achieve. In II Peter 1:3 we read: "His divine power has given us everything for life and godliness." We have all we need to please God in the Bible and by the indwelling Spirit of holiness (i.e., the Spirit Who through biblical direction and requisite strengthening produces holiness). This fact of

Command + provision == potential for change  
is hope-inspiring.

Command	+ Provision	= Potential for change
Don't worry	1. Directions: Matt. 6; Phil. 4 2. Strength: Phil. 4	Work rather than worry

Thirdly, God Himself is the Counsellor Who guides and directs through His Word. The Christian counsellor is not alone; for wisdom, principles, etc., he depends not on his own strength, but on the written, revealed will of God. Indeed, if a counselee doubts the truth of what the Christian counsellor advises, he may (1) ask him to show him clearly the scriptural basis for the advice (at some point the counsellor should do this unsolicited anyway), or (2) check out the scriptural teaching for himself (this is his obligation anyway, since it pleases God Acts 17:11). Since there is a divinely revealed source of information equally available to both counsellor and counselee, (1) the counselee ultimately isn't dependent upon the counsellor, and (2) he can monitor and evaluate the direction of counselling by following along in the Bible. Counselling that doesn't carry conviction that it is biblical is deficient (even when its thrust *is actually quite biblical*); the counselee must be convinced that his decisions and actions are pleasing to God. It is not proper for him to view them merely as expedient.

Genuine Christian counsellors not only accept the counselee's interest in checking out everything biblically, but (like Paul) *encourage* it.

When a Christian counselee sees for himself that his counsellor adheres closely to biblical principle, this too brings hope. This hope grows out of the fact that Jehovah is a covenant-keeping God Whose promises are dependable. He is also a God Who cares for the people whom He has saved and made His own (the covenant slogan appears in several forms but always includes the essential elements: "Your God . . . My people"). In other words, hope, in Christian counselling, is the direct result of one's salvation.

Throughout earlier chapters, from time to time I have referred to the title of this volume *More Than Redemption* promising to explain it at length. It is here at last that I must fulfil my promise.

The facts to which that vital theme points provide the clearest view of the Christian counsellor's stance in counselling. This is true especially in relationship to the hope that grows out of salvation, about which I have been speaking. And, the hope to which I refer is not pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by (salvation does promise that, it is true), but a hope that also says, "You can start slicing right now!"

So far, I have mentioned three important reasons for genuine hope in Christian counselling. But there is one more that is as important as these three may be excels them. In fact, it provides the basis for them, and for all other hope in counselling. In it lies the explanation of the Christian counsellor's hope; it is the truth signalled in the title. *More Than Redemption*.

First, let us be crisply clear about what the Bible means by the word *hope*. That word signifies far more than our pale approximation of that meaning in modern Western society. To us *hope* means "hope-so" (as in the fisherman's response to the question, "Do you think you'll catch any?"). But in the Scriptures hope never has such uncertainty connected to it. Indeed, certainty is inherent in the idea. Think of reading Titus 2:13 in the modern sense, "the blessed hope-so!" No, *hope* means something sure, something certain, that just hasn't happened yet. The *blessed hope*, accordingly, is "the happy expectation" or "the joyous anticipation." When we are told that we are "saved with hope" (Rom. 8:24), the hope of the resurrection, to which the passage refers is an assured certainty. God has promised it. We await a hope (biblically) because of the sure promises of God. When counselling by scriptural principles, we have all the hope that those written promises of God afford.

But what is the nature of the promise found in the title of the book? To what ought one to look forward in counselling? What sort of hope does he have? Can he be assured that all true counselling problems may be solved? If so, how? And to what extent? The answers to these questions are of the greatest importance in formulating what I have called the Christian Counsellor's Stance.

The stance of the Christian counsellor is fundamentally asymmetrical; what he promises (and seeks to get the counselee to anticipate) is *always more than he ever had before a better situation than ever existed in the past*. In some ways, a recognition and utilization of this fact in counselling is the greatest contribution that this volume can make; that is why the title strikes this note.

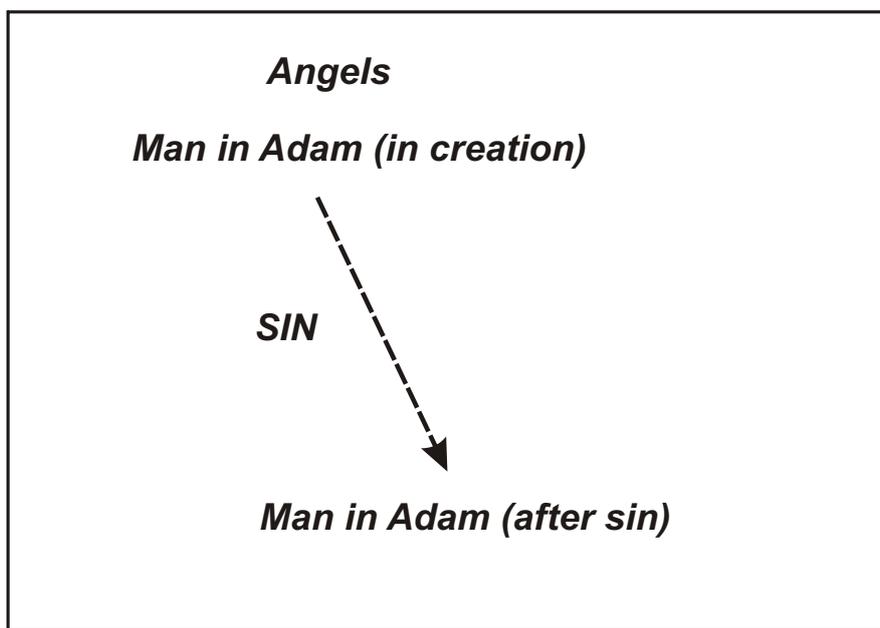
The Christian counsellor must never attempt to patch up what has fallen apart in his life, marriage, etc. Nor does he even offer a salvation like that of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who say that in Christ we have been returned to the state that Adam lost. The Christian counsellor does not believe, *strictly*, speaking, in mere renewal, or restoration or redemption (of what was lost); biblically, he believes in *more* than redemption. As a platform, upon which he develops his stance, he looks to a verse like Romans 8:20b:

But where sin abounded, grace far more abounded.

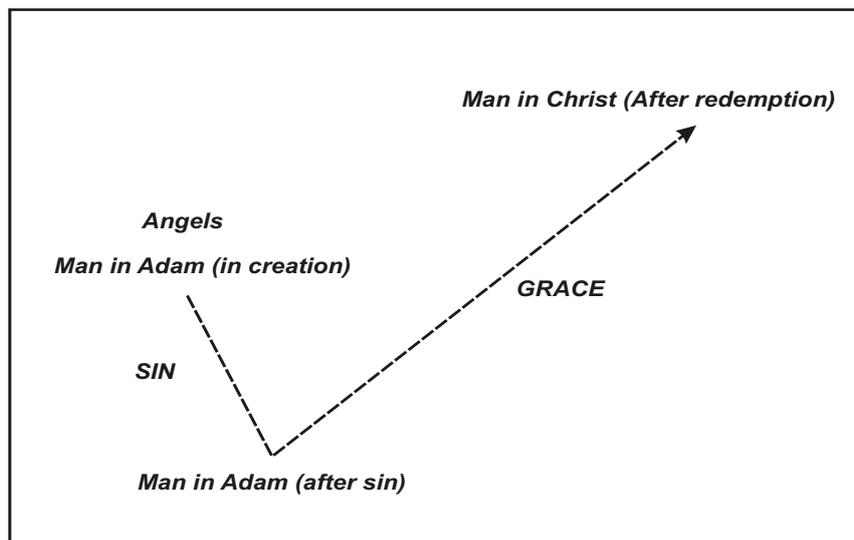
In that verse, Paul makes it plain that what Jesus Christ obtained for His people (by both His active and passive obedience) was *more* than they lost in Adam's sin and the fall of the human race. Sin and its effects are great (misery, death, etc.) and no biblical counsellor ever minimizes the abounding nature of sin. Instead of minimizing sin and its effects, he maximizes Christ and His redemptive work. Grace cannot be compared with sin (grace) "far more abounded."

Grace (and its effects) is greater than sin and its effects. Therefore, what Jesus Christ obtained for His people in salvation is not merely what Satan took away from Adam. Through His death and resurrection, Christ bought that and *much more*. Thus to be true to the New Testament teaching, the counsellor's stance must be based on the great truth that Christ offers counselees *more* than they ever had before.

Look at how this works. Adam was created "a little lower than the angels." By his sin, he plunged himself and all his posterity (Christ excepted) into the depths of further sin and its associated miseries far lower still. In the diagram (below) this is pictured clearly:



But in Christ, humanity has been raised (He had a human body and nature) far above principalities and powers (the very highest of the angels) into the heavenlies to sit at the right hand of God. A human being (Christ is that as well as divine) today sits in heaven! And, according to Colossians 3 and Revelation 2 and 3, this is what every believer can have fully some day in heaven and in part right now. This super-redemption is plainly indicated in the following diagram:



This diagram is not in the balanced, symmetrical shape of a V; rather, it is more like a check mark (✓) all out of balance in favour of God's "far more" abounding grace. That is how Romans 5:20b describes the situation; what we now have in salvation far exceeds what we lost in sin. Imagine you were a physician. A patient with a leg disability that has caused him to hobble from birth comes for treatment. He tells you that lately his problem has grown worse and that he can't walk at all, even with a hobble. Suppose all you could offer was to get him back on his feet, hobbling once more (as indeed it might be in medicine); is that all the Christian counsellor has to offer? Is he in the business of getting counselees back to painful hobbling once more? No! Definitely no! What he has is comparable to offering a pain-free, hobble-free walk something new, something better than the patient ever had before. Those who counsel in Christ's Name by grace have a stance superior to all others. We offer no one counselling that will merely help him to hobble; the hope of the Christian is that the counselee can run!

When counselees come with a marriage ripped to shreds, the Christian counsellor doesn't merely offer to put the marriage back together again; he isn't interested in restoring the status quo that existed prior to the separation. No, as Christ had *more* in mind in His death than restoring the status quo, so does the biblical counsellor. Such marriages unlike the one in Eden usually were begun wrong and never did go very well. That is why most counselees will tell you that they don't want to return to what they had before the marriage fell apart. To offer a return, therefore, is to offer no hope at all. And when they say, "I don't want to go back to that," they are right. The Christian counsellor alone has solid reason for believing that there can be a new (and *better*) future for that marriage in Christ; he has a theological reason—the doctrine of grace that I have referred to as more than redemption or as super-redemption. Christian counsellors do not offer to do *repair* work. Because of grace, they always seek to turn crosses into crowns. So they say, "We aren't talking about going back to your former ways of living; what Christ can give you is a new marriage a marriage that sings!" That is their stance; a stance of grace far more abounding!

Even though what Adam lost was perfect (although it wasn't yet complete), that wasn't enough for grace. Grace will settle for nothing less than the best. In Christ we shall, obtain not only all that Adam had, but all that he might have had, but didn't. So too in Him, the counselees' hope is set on obtaining far more of what a Christian marriage should have been like than they have ever known before (it won't ever be perfect or complete in this life).

The counsellor will explain his super-redemptive stance: "Even though it is sad that there has been so much unnecessary pain and misery and God's Name has been dishonoured so greatly [notice, he doesn't minimize the effects of sin], let's thank God for bringing you to the place where that kind of marriage has come to an end. And let's thank Him that you are now ready for radical change, and that you aren't willing to go on as you did in the past any longer. He has put an end to your past way of life, not to send you back to it again, but to give you something brand new. And if you mean business with Jesus Christ, that's exactly what you can have a marriage that sings!"

No matter what the problem is, no matter how greatly sin has abounded, the Christian counsellor's stance is struck by the far-more-abounding nature of the grace of Jesus Christ in redemption. What a difference this makes in counselling! Thank God for this gracious implication of His many-faceted salvation!!!

***More than redemption by Jay E Adams: 1997 reprint 1980.***