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Though the Bible has been acclaimed as being the biggest seller, the paradox, however, is that this Book is the least read and practiced. With all of the literature that is being read in the car, subways, planes, and at work, one looks twice when he sees one reading a Bible.

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Now, the question might be asked, "Why?" Of course, the answer to that is also found in the Word of God. When man writes a book about his fellow man, he is invariably made a hero. The skeletons are hid in the closet. For, you see, the presentation appeals to the natural man.

The Bible, in contrast, to this approach, has nothing good to say about man. Of course, who would want to read a book that condemns man rather than flatters him? In that God is a Spirit, and the Book which we call the Bible deals with spiritual phenomena or truth, man (because of his sinful condition) is incapable of responding to spiritual truths. I Cor. 2:14

#### HOW DID THIS ALL COME ABOUT?

We are told in the Book of Genesis (beginnings) that when the first man, Adam, disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden he had a conversion downward. Though God made man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life so that man became a living soul, he was also given a spirit through which he could communicate and fellowship with God. His body is referred to as a house or a tent in which the real person lives. That amazing piece of machinery, made up of 17 chemicals, is sustained and replenished by the food which one eats from day to day. The soul, which was given to man, enabled him to understand the physical world around him or natural phenomena. It was the spirit within man that enabled him to commune with God; and in fact, reflect the very character and image of God, which in turn would bring glory to God. It was this spiritual relationship that was lost when man sinned in the garden of Eden. This was a fulfillment of Genesis 2:17.

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." - He did not die physically, for we are told in Genesis 5:5 that he died when he was 530 years old. The death he died the moment he disobeyed God was far more hideous and devastating, for you see, physical death and eternal death would be but a by-product of this spiritual death that took place the moment Adam sinned. All of the offsprings, all of the descendants of Adam when born physical members of the human race are automatically under this three-fold curse of death. It is considered quite normal for a mother to inspect her new-born baby to see if all is well with that physical body, but rarely does this mother realize that something is missing on the inside--that that baby is born with a dead spirit, a spirit that is incapable of responding to God. In fact, the Bible declares that we're all born in sin. Psalm 51:5 "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalm 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." One does not have to teach their offsprings how to rebel, reflect selfishness, throw tantrums, and to want their way. This comes as standard equipment because man is born self-centered. He is born dead to God, referred to in Ephesians 2:1 as "dead in trespasses and sins." This is referred to theologically as "imputed" sin. Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." I Cor. 15:22a "For as in Adam all die." Not only are we sinners by imputation, we are inherent sinners because we are recipients of the genes of sin. Consequently, we then in turn produce personal sin. Thus, we are told in Romans 3:10-12,23 that we all commit personal sin. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none



that doeth good, no not one...For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Paul sums it up so simply in Galatians 3:22 where he says, "The scriptures have concluded, All are under sin."

You may feel, by using a relative standard, that you are as good, if not better, than many others. If anyone should find themselves in good favor with God, you should on the basis of your works. But, you see, the first thing you must concede to is that when God says, "There is none righteous, no not one" he's speaking to you and me. When he says "We are all as an unclean thing, and all of our righteousnesses (the best we can do) are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6) that means that no matter who we are or what we've done, we're all in the same boat, the boat is sinking, and there's no pump. When I'm willing to accept God's evaluation of me and see myself as he sees me, I then will see my need of a Saviour. I then will be able to appreciate the purpose of Christ's coming "to seek and to save that which was lost" Luke 19:10. Now I can respond to that great provision of love provided in Jesus Christ who died for my sins. In Romans 5:8 we are told that "commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Is that not good news? Sometimes individuals say that they believe in a God of love, and that their God of love could never send anybody to the lake of fire or the second death, and yet, that's exactly what God's love did. If the very righteousness and justice of God leveled a penalty upon or against sin, then God could not give eternal life to a sinner unless first of all the sin question was resolved. Thus, God in His love, sent His Son for the explicit purpose of resolving the barrier of sin that stood between God and man. God's love was exclusively manifested in the person of Jesus Christ and his death in man's behalf. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" I JN.3: II Cor. 5:19 "To wit, that God was in Christ (diety of Christ) reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses (sins) unto them."

Is this not good news? Though man is declared to be a guilty sinner deserving hell, Jesus Christ was willing to come to earth for the explicit purpose of resolving the sin question. This means that God is no longer holding what man is against him. For if the sin question was completely and totally resolved through Christ's death upon the cross, and if when he said, "It is finished" he meant what he said, then man is no longer condemned because of what he is though he is a sinner. His condemnation is based upon his unwillingness to respond, accept, or receive a free pardon or forgiveness afforded judicially through faith in that provision provided by Jesus Christ upon the cross.

The words "It is finished" means paid in full. No sins remain to be removed by man through religious works, rituals, ordinances, sacraments; for, you see, Christ died for our sins. This is the good news of the Gospel.

It is no longer the sin question, now it is the Son question. The issue is, "What have <sup>you</sup> done with Jesus Christ?" "He that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten son of God" John 3:18. Notice, condemnation is based upon belief, not sin. God has provided all that was needed to redeem sinful man. Man now has to willingly reject that provision, and by his refusal to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ he says in effect, "I will detour around that provision and work my way to hell, because I refuse to place my faith in the work of Christ." This is what it means to be justified by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the cross. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" Rom. 4:5. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any many should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). If I see that I am a sinner and believe that Jesus Christ came to die for



the likes of me and that heaven is now offered by this resurrected Christ as a personal gift to me, I can be sure of eternal life because my faith is not in my work or my ability to obtain heaven. My faith is in another's work--the work of Christ upon the cross. You see, salvation has been designed by God to exclude man. If it included you or me, salvation would be no stronger than its weakest link. Because I am born an imperfect sinner, the element of uncertainty would be present, for I would never know when I had fulfilled my responsibility. Of course, if it's Christ plus me, then salvation would not be based upon grace. Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise works is no more works." But if I take God at his word and rest in his assurance to me I can collapse in I John 5:12,13 -- "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." When one places their faith in Jesus Christ, they are born spiritually, they are born from above, and God infuses into them his very own life. That person is made spiritually alive to God. He becomes the recipient of a new divine nature, and as the basis of that new relationship he now can serve God in the power of the Spirit. Has the Trinity ever become an intimate reality to you? The issue is not changing your behaviour pattern; the issue is, Do you have Jesus Christ?, for "He that hath the Son hath life."