

The Fatal Omission

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the true faith, which is based on the blood of Christ, and the dangers of rejecting it in favor of a false one.

Topics: "True Faith", "Redemption Through Christ"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer delves into the distinction between the true faith and the counterfeits predicted for the last days, emphasizing the vital essence of the true faith that the false ones lack. He explores the perverted relationship between the Creator and fallen humanity, revealing the necessity of redemption. Chafer contrasts Satan's doctrine of self-help and self-development with God's method of bestowed righteousness and transformation through Christ. He highlights the significance of the sacrificial death of Christ as the only gateway for fallen man's redemption from Satan's power to God's glory.

Transcript

To some extent it has been necessary to anticipate the subject of this chapter in dealing with those counterfeits which are predicted for the last days, when there will be found a "form of godliness, denying the power thereof," and also the deep "doctrines of devils" which are "lies in hypocrisy." This chapter deals with that which is so vital in the true faith, and which is to be so carefully omitted in the false; that which makes the true so potent, and without which the false becomes an immeasurable deception. Everything depends upon this one point of distinction; for, according to prophecy, it is the only difference that is finally to exist between the false and the true. The issue is, therefore, as important as life itself.

It has already been seen that the method of counterfeiting, if successful, will require Satan to appropriate and incorporate in his false systems every available principle of the true; for the deception of the counterfeit depends wholly upon its likeness to the real. Herein is revealed the reason for calling that a lie or deception which is externally so like the truth. Certainly there could be no greater pitfall for souls than a system which seems to be the truth of God, and yet robs its followers of any basis for a true hope, and it will be found that the most terrible condemnation of Scripture is uttered against such systems and their promoters.

In seeking to discover the actual point of difference between the false and the true, it will be well, first, to consider the present perverted relation which exists between the Creator and the fallen human creature; for herein is revealed the necessity of that which God proposes to accomplish by redemption.

Two important points in Satan's doctrine were announced by him in the Garden of Eden when he first approached the woman, and these two declarations have been an important part of the world's creeds throughout the history of man. The first was a bold denial of a positive statement of God, when Satan said: "Ye shall not surely die." Whether Satan intended here simply to deny the truth of God's statement, or whether he overestimated his own resources and proposed to shield them from their God-appointed doom, is not clear. Certainly the latter view is in keeping with Satan's original purpose, as well as with his evident sincerity. It is quite reasonable to conclude that, if he could be so misguided as to attempt to be like the Most High, he would willingly have undertaken to protect man from judgment which followed as a result of loyalty to himself. Satan is striving, at any rate, to direct the lives of those who are under his power into a degree of self development that will be a substitute for the revealed purpose of God for men.

The second announcement of Satan assured the woman that they would, by this independent action, "be as God;" and this, so far from promising death, seemed to them the immediate realization of the highest human ideal. It was undoubtedly the original purpose of God in creation that humanity should eventually become like Himself. By what process of development this was to have been accomplished, had not sin entered, has not been revealed. It is enough to know that even after man had fallen from his high estate through sin, this Divine purpose was not abandoned, though the problems involved were immeasurably increased: and now, through the unsearchable riches of His grace, the realization of that which surpasses all human dreams has been made possible, even to fallen and polluted man.

The consummation of the transforming work of God is thus described: "For whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (I Jno. 3:2). "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21 R.V.).

It is natural that Satan should suggest to humanity that which had been the object of his own unholy ambition; and especially is it natural, since by such a separation of humanity from its God, he could claim that authority over them, and secure that worship from them, which he so much craved.

There are, then, at least two distinct methods proposed for the uplifting of humanity, and these are brought into sharp contrast; for one is of Satan, and the other is of God. Since both these methods claim to aim at the same end--though one ideal is not worthy to be compared with the other--the method, alone, forms the first point for discussion.

Under the Satanic control, man has always been strangely influenced in the matter of his relation to his Creator. He, too, has been willing to assume a hopeless position of independence toward God; and, under that abnormal relation, he has gone out alone to grope his way; blindly seeking to build his own character, and by education and cultivation to improve his natural heart, which God has pronounced humanly incurable. He has also bent his inventive skill to the development of means by which God-imposed labor may be avoided; and much of his selfish greed springs from a desire to purchase a substitute who shall bear for him the discomfort of a sweating brow. "God is not in all his thoughts;" nor has he any disposition to claim the help of God upon the terms upon which it is offered. The Satanic method for life prompts him

to become a god by a process of self-help and development of the finite resources.

It is very possible and natural to introduce much of religious form into the world system of self-help; for there is a great field for religious exercise for the one who is attempting to make himself Godlike, and there is endless material for supplication and prayer that all available assistance may be secured to aid one in that humanly impossible task. A devout spirit is, therefore, a natural part of the Satanic doctrine, and the predicted "forms of godliness" will naturally appear.

There is a vast difference between an individual supplicating God to save him: and one supplicating God to help him save himself. The latter is a natural part of the Satanic plan and has no promise of Divine favor upon it. All such religious exercise, though full of outward forms and deep sincerity, leaves its moral aspirants doomed, alike with the most degraded, to an everlasting separation and banishment from the presence of God: "which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. 2:23 R.V.). Such prayer and religious practice do not really place the saving work in the hands of God, but mockingly ask Him to give His sanction and assistance to that which wholly dishonors and really disregards Him, and which is also both unreasonable and impossible.

Though the process by which unfallen man would have reached a higher development has not been revealed, it is certain that he would have been then, as now, wholly dependent upon the Creator. Man's present independence toward God is the blindest delusion of the fallen nature; for complete independence cannot even be assumed in the least of all temporal things: how much less is it possible in that which is spiritual!

Again, the self-saving principle is utter folly, since God must demand a quality which no human can present. God's requirement is not unreasonable, however, for He also proposes to bestow, in grace, all He ever demands. The absolute holiness of God demands no less than holiness in all who are acceptable to Him; yet He has never mocked man by asking him to make himself acceptable, or even to attempt to do it by Divine help. True salvation is wholly a work of God. It is said to be both a finished work and a gift, and, therefore, it lays no obligation upon the saved one to complete it himself, or to make after payments of service for it; though the saved one is called upon to serve from another and more glorious motive.

The Divine terms of obtainment into Godlikeness are clearly stated in the Scriptures; but the hopeless estimate God has placed upon human nature at its best, and the logical necessity that man shall receive, as a gift, all that he has, and be forever a debtor to the Divine giver,--these things have always been rejected by self-sufficient and Satan-inspired humanity. These terms are the only possible or reasonable relations that could rightfully exist between fallen humanity and its Creator. Here Satan has blinded the minds of the lost lest they should believe, and he has made that which is reasonable and natural seem to be unreasonable and unnatural. They are unable to abandon their Satan-inspired sense of self-sufficiency and independence of God and receive from Him, as a gift, every possession commendable in His sight.

The controversy between Satan-ruled man and God is one of method; whether it shall be one of self-righteousness and character building: or one of bestowed righteousness and character by the fruit of the Spirit. Will man try to save himself: or humbly submit to being saved by Another? Will he try to conform himself to what little he knows to be good and true: or will he be transformed by the power of God into that which is no less than the image of Christ? Will he present the sacrifice of a sincere effort to be moral and religious: or accept the God-provided sacrifice for all sin, in the shed blood of Christ? Will he try to

establish himself before God on the ground of his own works: or rest in the finished work of Christ for him? Will he try to improve his fallen nature: or partake of the Divine nature and become a Son of God by the power of God, through faith in Christ Jesus?

One method, it may be seen, depends wholly upon self for its realization; promises glory to man alone; and has its origin at that unknown time when Satan proposed in his heart to become like the Most High. The other method is dependent upon God alone, and, therefore, demands an attitude of faith toward him for its realization. It issues in glory to the Creator, Who alone is worthy to be praised. The latter, in contrast with Satan's method, had its origin in the purpose of God, which He purposed before the foundation of the world. Therein, transcendent blessings are offered; stores of grace are unfolded; and the omnipotent power of God is seen working for the transformation of His human creatures. These two methods are confused only because they seem to aim at the same general result. In reality their results, like their methods, are not only incomparable, but they are as far removed from each other as God's ways are higher than man's ways.

The revelation of God in regard to salvation might have been limited to the fact that He, rather than man, was to accomplish the work; and while much that is involved in the mighty undertaking of redemption has not been, and probably cannot be, reduced to the level of human understanding, He saw fit to reveal much that was necessary, on both the Godward and the manward side, in providing this way of salvation. No human conception of the atonement is complete, yet, as the all-sufficient sacrificial death of Christ is clearly stated in Scripture, its value, though unanalyzed, may be appropriated; for man is not saved by what he comprehends or understands, but his salvation is made possible by his attitude of willingness and expectation toward the transforming power of God.

In determining the exact point of the truth that is to be omitted from the Satanic counterfeit, it is important to distinguish between the Person and work of Christ. In the one is included His teachings and example, both in His life and death: in the other is included His substitutionary, sacrificial, and atoning death for the sin of the world. There is no controversy as to the value of the teachings and example of Jesus; but the wisdom of this world is displayed in ever-increasing antagonism against the blood of the Cross. This enmity has never been founded on the Word of God, for Scripture does not deny itself. The opposition appeals to pride and human reason, and dares to challenge the plain statements of Scripture on this particular point. Very much is thus omitted; for all the meaning of sacrifice in the Old Testament and all the promises of redemption in the New Testament, are inseparably related to the blood of the Cross. It may be to the Jew a stumbling block, and to the Greek foolishness; yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, "it is the power of God and the wisdom of God."

In Ephesians, the eternal purpose of God is said to be the complete perfection of souls: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (1:4). And that transformation is also said to be by the blood of Christ: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (1:7). In like manner the object of this transformation is said to be that the Church may be the present and eternal manifestation of the wisdom, love and power of God: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (3:10). "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (2:7). "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies" (1:19, 20).

There is also a strong contrast of figures used in the Old Testament which accurately emphasizes the mighty power of the Creator in the regeneration of a soul. In Psalm 8:3 the creation of the solar system is mentioned as the work of the fingers of God: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained," but in Isa. 53:1, where the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ is referred to, it is spoken of as the effort of the Creator's arm: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The suggestion here given, that the creation of a universe is the work of His fingers, and the regeneration of souls is the work of His mighty arm, is not overdrawn; for the price of redemption cannot be measured by corruptible things, such as gold and silver: but is purchased at the price of the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (I Pet. 1:19).

The Scriptures abound in statements that regeneration, and the whole transforming work of redemption, are accomplished on the ground of the sacrificial blood of the Cross; and if these statements of Scripture are rejected, the discussion never can be one of interpretation of Scripture, but becomes a question of the authority of the testimony of the Bible. A few of these passages are here given: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:4-6). "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jno. 1:29). "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:25). "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:8, 9). "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). "Who gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 1:4). "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:11-14). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Pet. 2:24). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (I Pet. 3:18). "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I Jno. 2:2).

From the foregoing passages it may be seen that, according to the Scriptures, the stupendous transformation of regeneration is not only the greatest Divine undertaking, but is directly accomplished by the sacrificial death and shed blood of Christ, and is sealed in security by the Holy Spirit of promise.

The sacrificial death of Christ presents the only gateway for fallen man from the power and final doom of Satan to the glory and transcendent light of God; and there is nothing strange in the Satan-inspired "offence of the Cross" which is often garnished with culture, worldly wisdom, and religious forms. Even in Paul's time there were those who were enemies of the Cross of Christ: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). These were evidently recognized leaders in the Christian fellowship, who were undoubtedly ardent admirers of the Person of Jesus, as revealed in His earthly life and example: yet Paul does not hesitate to mention his own tears at the fatal omission in their preaching; for they were enemies of the Cross of

Christ.

Again, it is predicted in II Pet. 2:1, 2 that a fierce enmity against the Cross should appear: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." Here again the denial is against the purchase or redeeming work of Christ rather than His Person or character. They are offended at the Lord who bought them, though they may be devoted to the Lord who taught them. These Satanic agents are here, as before, described as those who seem to be teachers in the true faith, yet they bring in damnable heresies, in all covered subtlety, which crystallizes in a denial of the redemption that is in Christ. Being only blinded unregenerate men, they may suppose themselves to be ministers of righteousness and apostles of Christ; their humanitarian dreams may inspire tireless effort and zeal; their doctrine may become world-wide in its influence; and they may drive their mighty ecclesiastical machinery by the injunctions of Scripture: yet if the curtain could be lifted, their "angel of light" would be found to be Satan; working through them to resist the purpose of God; and themselves the ministers of Satan; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared as with a hot iron, daring in their exalted position to devitalize the Gospel of its power unto salvation, and dragging immortal souls after them into hell.

It is not strange that there is resentment against the mystery of the Cross which does not exist against any other inexplicable fact in the world. It is not strange that the ministers of Satan, appearing as the apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness, should fortify their lies and hypocrisies by contending for every phase of revealed truth; grounding their authority so positively in the Scriptures of truth: yet subtly omitting, or violently denying, the one and only point upon which the interests of God and Satan divide. It is not strange that there is a wide call for a "restatement of the truth," which usually proposes to omit the new birth and substitute self-effort to be good, and character building, in its place. It is not strange that the wise and cultured of this world feel their aesthetic natures shocked by the blood of the Cross, yet entertain no sense of their own abhorrent pollution in the sight of the infinitely holy One. It is not strange that the world assumes to have advanced beyond that which is repeatedly said to be the manifestation of the wisdom of God; branding as bigots, insincere, or ignorant, all who still hold to the whole testimony of God. It is not strange that the atonement by blood is omitted, for it is Satan's hour and the power of darkness, and the true child of God must patiently bear the ever-increasing reproaches of his crucified Lord, until the glory dawns and the shadows flee away.

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