



The Reflector

Published and edited monthly in the interest of calling people back to the Bible
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February 2014

Isaiah's Filthy Rags

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Calvinists, in their desire to show that our salvation is solely by the grace of God, often go to Isaiah 64:6 to show that God views all of man's deeds of righteousness as filthy rags:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isa. 64:6).

The idea is to show that nothing we do, not even our righteous deeds, contribute to our salvation, rather God sees them as filthy rags. This, supposedly, is why our salvation is by grace alone because even our acts of obedience is considered as "filthy rags."

This is an abuse of this passage. The passage is not speaking of how God generally views the righteous acts of obedience of his people. It is in the midst of a prayer on behalf of Israel that Isaiah started chapter 53:15 and continues through chapter 64. In the verse before us, he is contritely confessing the wickedness that had taken them away from God. They were so wicked that they were all as unclean. They were so polluted with sin that even their "righteousnesses" (plural) or righteous deeds were as filthy rags. When one turns away from hearing the Lord, as Israel had, then even his sacrifices and prayers (righteous deeds) are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 15:8; 28:9). That was the state of Israel that needed rectifying. If they turned back to hearing the Lord, then their righteousnesses (righteous deeds), like offering sacrifices and prayers would no longer be an abomination or as "filthy rags."

This is all part of the "imputed righteousness of

Christ" doctrine. Since even all our righteousness, supposedly is as filthy rags, we need the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us so that God does not see our "filthy rags" but sees the perfect righteousness of Christ that has been deposited into our account. His perfect righteousness then by grace not only covers our sins (unrighteous acts) but also covers our righteous acts which are really but filthy rags in God's sight.

But there is little hitch in that theory. The Bible plainly says that each one will be judged according to *his* deeds. He takes into accounts man's "well doing" and obedience.

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man **according to his deeds**: To them who by patient continuance in **well doing** seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and **do not obey** the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man **That worketh good**, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:" (Romans 2:4-10 KJV) ■

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (1 John 3:7)

Subjective Spirit Leading

Terry Benton

Subjective “Spirit Leading” is when one is moved by imagined nudging and impulses, then attributes that imagination to the “leading of the Spirit”. It often never is in complete harmony with Spirit “revelation” in the Bible. It is sometimes outright contrary to Spirit guidance through “revelation” (Eph.3:3-5).

It is completely subjective as to whether it is the Holy Spirit instead of a deceiving spirit or just plain human desire and imagination. Yet, you get drawn into the language and thinking that imagines the Lord walking and talking with you, and then you start saying “the Lord told me this” or “the Lord showed me this”.

Francis Chan offers stories from those who have experienced “real encounters” with God. He says each of us has the choice every day “to depend on yourself, to live safely, and to try to control your life. Or you can live as you were created to live as a temple of the Holy Spirit of God, as a person dependent on Him, desperate for God the Spirit to show up and make a difference.” Yet, he is basically telling people to imagine the Spirit “showing up” in some emotion-driven and imagination-perceived way, and all such imaginations automatically becomes self-confirmation that the Holy Spirit instead of Satan as an angel of light is doing this “showing up”.

Beth Moore is another that uses this imagination-driven approach where her imagination of talks with God become conversations with God in which she reports “what God told me”. This kind of thinking is very dangerous, and yet some of our brethren are jumping on the band-wagon of these kind of authors and speakers and promote them as truly guided by God.

The real “Holy Spirit” showed up in guiding the apostles into “all truth”. He revealed and confirmed “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” “Jude 3-4; Heb.2:1-4. He powerfully leads through that revelation (Heb.4:12; Eph.3:3-5). When we are listening to the Spirit in scriptures

used correctly we are listening to the voice of the real Holy Spirit.

Imaginations must be cast down and not exalted to the level of God’s word. When a person does not “abide in the doctrine of Christ” but gives greater or equal guiding authority to their imagination of conversations with God, they have quit “holding fast to the Head” (Col.2:19) and have “intruded into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Col.2:18). This is “empty deceit” because it imaginary conversations with God told as if it happened in reality, and this is a form of lying since God did not actually tell them anything. It is purely adult form of make-believe and empty of real revelation. Be careful of those who promote such. ■

It Was Necessary

Edward O. Bragwell, Jr.

When reading the accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus in the gospels, you cannot but be impressed with the great detail with which Old Testament prophesy is fulfilled. In many cases, the writers of the gospels are careful to point out these prophecies and their fulfillment. Matthew points out that the dividing of Jesus’ garments was “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet” and goes on to quote the prophesy from Psalm 22:18. (Matt. 27:35). Mark says that by being crucified between the two robbers that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53:12 which stated that he would be numbered with the transgressors. (Mark 15:27-28). John tells us that the piercing of Jesus’ side and the fact that Jesus’ legs were not broken while he hung upon the cross were in fulfillment of the prophecies in Psalm 34:20 and Zechariah 12:10. These are just a few examples of the Old Testament prophecies which were fulfilled when Jesus was rejected by the Jews and put to death.

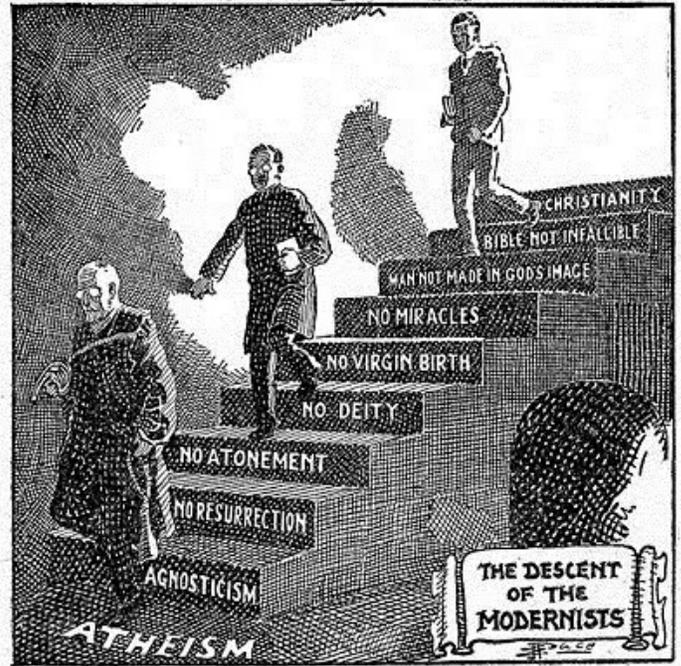
Why is it so significant that these prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in such detail at the

end of Jesus' time here on earth? Religious teachers of our day sometimes make the accusation that Jesus came to this earth to set up his kingdom in Jerusalem. But the Jewish people refused to accept him as their ruler and rejected Him and killed Him, forcing Him to implement a kind of alternate plan. It is argued that Jesus then put the church in place to make do until He could at some later time come back and set up the kingdom, ruling from Jerusalem, that He originally intended to do. So many today apply the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament to look forward to some time in our future when Jesus will finally be able to come and set up that kingdom that He had originally planned but was prevented from implementing because of the evil Jewish nation.

There are many things in the Scriptures that refute this idea and show the absurdity of it. One thing that clearly refutes this idea is the fulfillment of Scripture seen in the death of Christ. The fact that His rejection and death at the hands of the Jews was prophesied in detail many years before it happened shows that it was part of God's plan all along. It could not be true then that this was some kind of mistake and a result of a miscalculation on the part of the Lord. It was then not necessary for Him to come up with some sort of secondary plan as some want to imply. The prophecies and their fulfillment show without a doubt that this was God's only plan all along. The rejection of Jesus and His being put to death at their hands was necessary in order for God to bring about his plan to save mankind, not a mistake.

Luke tells that Jesus told his disciples, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46-47). No, the rejection and crucifixion of Christ were not a mistake that Jesus is planning to return and correct someday. IT WAS NECESSARY!

(Editor's Note: It has been a little over fourteen months since Eddie's spirit returned to God who gave it. We miss him every day. Articles like this are a testimony to his faith. Truly he, like Abel, "being dead still speaks.") ■



Old Testament Forgiveness

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Occasionally I hear someone say that there was no forgiveness under the law of Moses, only condemnation. But, was that really the case?

At least twelve times, as the law was being explained in Leviticus and Numbers, it is expressly stated that upon the priests offering (animal) sacrifices for their sins, their sins were forgiven. (Leviticus 4:20,26,31,35; 5,10,13,16,18; 6:7; Numbers 15:25,26,28)

David, who lived under that law, said that he received forgiveness: "I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' And You forgave the iniquity of my sin." (Psalms 32:5 NKJV)

Yet, the Hebrew writer says, "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." (Hebrews 10:3-4 NKJV) And "And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." (Hebrews 10:11 NKJV) Then the chapter goes on to show that only the sacrifice of Christ can take away sin.

We are also told that Jesus died for the sins of those under the Old Testament: “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” (Hebrews 9:15 NKJV)

Do these New Testaments statements contradict those of the Old Testament concerning the forgiveness of sins. I don't think I would be splitting hairs in saying that while their sins were *forgiven* under the law of Moses their sins were not *redeemed* or *taken away*. The idea of redeeming is to buy back or to ransom. The animal sacrifices were but a shadow or type of that great sacrifice to come (Christ). They were not an adequate ransom to take away sins, it required the sacrifice of the Lamb of God to *take away* the sin of the world by paying the ransom price. (John 1:29).

Our sins are sometimes referred to as our debts (Matt. 6:12). By way of illustration, suppose that you run up a huge debt on a credit card. One of the terms of the credit card is that a debt can never be wiped out until it is paid in full. You come to realize that you are so over your head in that debt that you will never be able pay the balance. You don't know what you are going to do, so you contact the company and ask for mercy. The customer service rep tells you that according to the contract it must be paid in full. But, because he knows that there is a wealthy benefactor who is willing to pay the balance for anyone who cannot pay – but, he will not pay it immediately but has set up a fund to pay it off at some date in the future. So, the basis of that guaranteed future payment, the company is willing to forgive you of the debt (meaning that YOU are released from paying the debt) but you need to understand the debt is still on the books and will remain there unpaid, not taken away, until such time the benefactor's payment is made. Until such time you will receive a monthly statement with the balance on it as a reminder that the debt is still owed and not forgotten – continuing making you to be conscious of the debt.

Another thing about that benefactors gracious fund once it has paid and taken away the balance, he has arranged for the fund to pay ahead for each future charge to the card (by taking it away, erasing

it from the record immediately), not automatically, but for the asking and acceptance of the gracious offer by meeting a few minimal conditions.

So, those under the old testament who met terms for forgiveness received it, but their sin was not taken away or redeemed until Jesus was ransomed for it as well as for ours in this age. ■

Use NIV with Caution

Greg Gwin

It has been observed that Christians in increasing numbers are using the New International Version of the Bible as their primary translation. While the NIV provides a very “readable” copy of the Scriptures, users should be informed about several significant difficulties.

Most notably, the NIV promotes the false doctrines of Calvinism by inaccurately translating several key verses. For instance, Psalms 51: 5 in the NIV reads, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me”. Obviously, this teaches the Calvinistic notion of inherited sin which is plainly denied in many other Bible texts. The KJV and ASV read, “in sin did my mother conceive me”. There is quite a difference in being conceived in sin (describing the spiritual condition of the world into which the author was born) and in being personally sinful from the point of conception.

Additionally, the NIV frequently refers to man's “sinful nature” (see Rom. 8:3ff, Eph. 2:3, Col. 2:11, & many other passages). This teaches another tenet of Calvinism, namely total depravity - the idea that man must sin – it is in his very nature to do so. Again, this is denied elsewhere in the Scriptures. Other versions simply refer to the “flesh” in these important verses.

What should we do? Considering these and other objections to the NIV, we suggest that Christians should exercise great caution-in using this translation as their principle study Bible. Other versions are much more reliable, and several are equal to the NIV in “readability”. Choose the NKJV or the NASV if you want a trustworthy translation without the old English of the KJV. It would be best to reserve the NIV as a study aid in providing comparative readings. ■