

GOD'S PROVISION FOR SIN

by Walton Weaver

God's provision for sin was not an afterthought on His part. The glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ was announced very early in His dealings with man. In Genesis 3:15 the serpent is told that the seed of the woman would crush his head. This has been called the "maternal promise," the "protevangelium," the first proclamation of the gospel of grace. And indeed it is. The promised victory moves beyond the collective seed of the woman in the first part of the verse to the singular "it" in the last part, a clear reference to Jesus Christ our Lord as the final Conqueror.

Barriers to be Removed

Before this promise could be fulfilled in Jesus Christ the very things that stood in the way for centuries would have to be adequately dealt with by God.

1. *The Law.* The law of Moses, for example, could not give the desired deliverance from sin. Paul says it was weak and faulty. "For the law made nothing perfect" (Heb. 7:19); it was weak and unprofitable (Heb. 7:18). "For if the first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second" (Heb. 8:7).

In what sense was the law weak and faulty? Primarily because of its demands and man's inability to live up to them. The law proposed release from sin and sought to accomplish it through a perfect conformity to its requirements by man. But the justification which the law sought was never realized due to man's inability to accomplish what it demanded of him. Once the law had been violated by man it then proved powerless to deliver him. See Rom. 8:3-4. Paul elsewhere quotes from the law to prove this point: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Gal. 3:10). No man could do the "all things" which the law demanded, therefore no flesh could be justified by the law (Gal. 3:11).

The fault was in man and his weakness and inability, not in the law per se. Paul tells us that it was impossible for the law to free man from the law of sin and death "because it was weak through the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). This puts the blame where it belongs. The weakness was "through the flesh," or in man's inability to keep it perfectly. Had man been able to keep the law perfectly-had he never been a violator of it-he would have been justified by it, having never been condemned by it as a lawbreaker, or sinner. Because this never happened another way had to be provided-"a new and living way" (Heb. 10:20).

2. *Death.* Once the law had been dealt with, provision would also have to be made for deliverance from the law of sin and death; the power of death must itself be destroyed. Adam and Eve were told that the very day they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good

and evil they would surely die (Gen. 2:17). This has been the universal rule: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

Not only is "death" as it is used in these references a spiritual separation from God, but it is a powerful force that is working havoc and ruin in the lives of all who have given themselves over to sin. And that proves to be the condition of all men and women, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Though Adam and Eve were the first to break God's law, they only introduced into the world what would prove to be true of all others who reach the age of accountability and know right from wrong. Because all have sinned, the sentence of death has been pronounced upon all.

Condemned sinners are under the wrath of God. Through man's own hard and impenitent heart he brings upon himself "wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:6). You may ask, "You mean to tell me that such judgment is righteous on God's part?" Let Paul answer: "Is God unrighteous who visiteth with wrath? (I speak after the manner of men) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" (Rom. 3:5-6). So man needs freedom from the law, and he also needs freedom from sin and its consequence which law alone cannot accomplish for him.

God's Remedy

In this condition, what was man to do? Left to himself there was nothing he could do to free himself from the demands of the law and the ensuing penalty as a lawbreaker. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us . . ." (Eph. 2:4) both removed the law which was contrary to us, and at the same time made full provision for deliverance from sin and the power of death. He removed the law, took it out of the way, nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15). In doing this He made room for the new covenant, based on better promises (Heb. 8:6). He had to do away with the first in order that He might establish the second (Heb. 10:9).

With one righteous act God both removed the law and made adequate provision for sin. When Christ nailed the law to the cross in His death, He also through death destroyed "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). God could never have simply over looked sin. The price for sin had to be paid. What was God's answer? Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). God set forth Christ to be a propitiation for us by Christ's blood, and in this way was "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-26). Paul says that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Peter confirms Paul's statement when he says that Christ himself "bore our sins in His own body on the tree... " (2 Pet. 2:24).

Christ then has become our substitute. He has taken our place and suffered the penalty of sin for us. He died for my sins and yours. No other provision would have sufficed. The life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11), and "apart from the shedding of blood, there is no

remission" (Heb. 9:22). Not just any blood would have done; the blood of bulls and goats could not remit sins (Heb. 10:1-4). It took the blood of Him who had kept the law of God perfectly, the only one who had been tempted in all points like we are, and yet without sin (Heb. 4:14-16).

Praise God for His magnificent gift!