

THE SAVING LIFE OF CHRIST
Three Categories of Men
I Corinthians 2-3

One of the most remarkable events in the Bible is the story of how God brought His people **Israel** out of **Egypt**, through the *wilderness*, and into the **land of Canaan**. It's as though the Holy Spirit gave us a point of reference...a framework into which are woven all the mighty colored threads of truth. What does it mean to be in the *land of Egypt*? What it means to be in the *wilderness*. And what it means to be in *Canaan*...the **Promised Land**...the land *flowing with milk and honey*.

For over *four hundred years*, the *children of Israel* had been *enslaved* by the *Egyptians*...suffering bitterly beneath burdens inflicted by their *taskmasters*...*helpless* to save themselves...*hopeless* but for the fact that *four hundred years before*, God had *promised Abraham* that He would act to *redeem them*. This is the picture God gives us of the *forgiven sinner*.

I. THE NATURAL MAN: (I Corinthians 2:14)

At the fall of man...when **Adam** sinned...God *withdrew* His Holy Spirit from the human spirit. Although man retained his body, and still possessed a functioning *soul*...his *mind*, *emotion*, and *will*...he was *empty* of God.

Spiritually dead...man was destitute of *spiritual life* which could be his only by virtue of *God's presence* through the Holy Spirit, *within the human spirit*. God had *left him!*

This was the *consequence of sin*...the *absence of all spiritual life!*

"For the wages of sin is death..."

~Romans 6:23a

As *the absence of all physical life* means *physical death*...so *the absence of all spiritual life* means *spiritual death*. This is the *wages of sin*...not the *ultimate consequence of*

sin one day...but that which has been the *consequences of sin* ever since *man fell*...and is now the *consequences of sin to all who have not as of yet been saved* from this condition.

This *sin principle*...is called in the Bible...*the flesh*. To the *lost*...the **natural man**. To the **carnal man**...*fleshly, sinful desires*.

"For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh...For the mind set on the flesh is death...because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

~Romans 8:5a, 6a, 7-8

This isn't talking about the *human body*, which in and of itself isn't sinful. *The flesh* in this biblical sense speaks of an *evil predisposition*...a *satanic activity* from which springs all of man's own *inbred wickedness*. That's what Jesus emphasized when He said in **Mark 7:20-23**...

"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

~Mark 7:20-23

This *flesh* that Jesus is speaking about...this *sin principle* ...is pictured by the *land of Egypt*. *Egypt* represents our *natural condition*...of *spiritual death*...of *being in bondage to sin*. And the *Egyptian taskmaster* represents the flesh's *oppressive control* over *human behavior*.

It's quite obvious that it's *no more God's purpose* or *desire* for anyone to *remain in this condition of spiritual destitution and defeat* than it was *God's purpose* for His earthly people...*Israel...to remain in the land of Egypt, oppressed* by the *Egyptian taskmasters*. That's why God raised up *Moses to lead His people out* of *Egypt*.

"The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

~II Timothy 2:24-26

II. THE SPIRITUAL MAN: (I Corinthians 2:6-13, 15)

When God raised up *Moses* to lead His people out of *Egypt*, He commanded the people to take *a lamb without blemish*, and to *slay it without breaking any bone*. The *blood of this lamb* was then to be painted *on the doorposts* and *on the lintel* of every home. This would become known later as the *Passover*...for the night that the lamb was slain, God *executed judgment* upon the *Egyptians*, so that *all the first-born* in the land of *Egypt died*...from the *first-born of Pharaoh*, to the *first-born of every animal*. God's plan for *Israel* was this...

"The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance."

~Exodus 12:13-14

This picture foreshadowed the *death of Christ* upon the cross, and why *John the Baptist* declared...

"...Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

~John 1:29

Or as *Paul* proclaimed...

"...For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed."

~I Corinthians 5:7

Just as the lamb *bore the judgment* in the place of the first-born in the house of *Israel*...so Jesus Christ *bore our sin* in His own body *on the cross* at *Calvary*.

"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."

~I Peter 3:18

"If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

~Romans 8:10-11

This is God's plan of *redemption*. When Jesus *died upon the cross*, God *executed judgment* upon your *sin* in His Son. He *took your place in death*, in order that you might be *reconciled* to God...a *forgiven sinner*. He became *sin*.

All God asked His people *Israel* to do, was to *apply the blood* to the doorposts and to the lintel *by faith*...and then *rest* in His promise. All that God asks each and every one of us to do is to *apply the death of Christ* to our own need as a guilty sinner, *by faith*, then *rest* in His promise of *forgiveness* and *salvation*. His *free gift* of *eternal life*.

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

~Romans 8:14-17

Because of God’s *miraculous intervention*, the Israelites went through the **Red Sea** on *dry land*. But when the **Egyptians** tried to follow, they were *drowned*. While God’s people *passed through the place of death into a new land*...their enemy was *buried in the place of death*. In God’s economy we go *with Him*...spiritually...leaving our *old nature* called the *flesh*...*dead* and *buried with Him*.

This illustrates God’s purpose in the cross of Jesus Christ in two ways...

- First, that we might be *forgiven...being saved from sin’s penalty* because Christ died for us.
- Secondly, that we might be *delivered from sin’s power* because this *old sin nature* called *the flesh*, died with Him.

When you put your *faith* in the One who died for you... Jesus Christ...at that very moment, God *restores to your human spirit* the *presence of the Holy Spirit*...and by whose presence you receive the *very life of the Lord Jesus*...risen from the dead...and become in Him a partaker of His *divine nature*. This is what it means to be *“in Christ”* and *“Christ in you.”*

The presence of the living Christ, by His Spirit *within you*, *imparts to you* all the things that pertain to *life* and *godliness*...all that you need to live a life of *righteousness*, of *holiness*, of *purity*, and of *character*.

It is Christ’s *indwelling* which is represented by the *land of Canaan*...the *Promised Land*...the *land of plentiful provision*. **Canaan** in the Bible isn’t *heaven*...it’s Christ Himself...*living* His *victorious life* through you right now.

This is the difference between *spiritual maturity* and *spiritual infancy*.

“For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

~Hebrews 5:13-14

“If anyone thinks he is...spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.”

~I Corinthians 14:37

III. THE CARNAL MAN: (I Corinthians 3:1-3)

This is the *wilderness*! This is the tragedy of Christendom today, just as it was the tragedy of God’s people **Israel** then. For *forty years*, they *wondered in the wilderness*. A people living in *self-imposed poverty*. Every day they spent in the *desert* was a day they could have spent in *Canaan*...for God had already *given them the land*! They *would not believe* that the God who *brought them out* was the God who *could bring them in*.

The *wilderness* is a picture of what Scripture describes as a **carnal Christian**. It means that you *have been redeemed by faith in Christ* through His reconciling death...you

have *received the gift of the Holy Spirit*...but you live a life of *self-imposed poverty*. You live under the subtle influence of a defeated foe...*the flesh*...which Christ took with Him into the grave.

You are just like the *children of Israel* who lived for *forty years*...plagued by the memories and the land (of the life) left behind in *Egypt*...instead of enjoying the *blessing* put before you...the *land of Canaan*. As a result, you enjoy neither...the *flesh pot of Egypt*, nor of the *milk and honey of Canaan*. You are *wondering in the desert*.

“For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.”

~Hebrews 5:13

There is nothing quite so pathetic as a Christian who has been vested with *“all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”* ...what it is to be *in Christ*...the One who has made available all the *infinite resources of heaven*...yet who *in ignorance* or *in defiance* or *in disobedience*, scratches out a *mere existence* in the meager resources which he brings with him out of his *unbelief*.

The **carnal Christian** is the one who has *received the Holy Spirit* and *all the fulness of Christ*...yet *ignores* His presence and *struggles* to live the Christian life as though Christ *were not there*. He is the one who constantly *begs* and *pleads* for all that God *has already given him*, but which he will not take. He is the one who *will not step out by faith* upon the glorious fact that *Christ is his life*...and therefore *his victory*!

Contrasting illustrations:

- **Hand in the glove**...to be *“in Christ”* and *“Christ in you.”*

- **High-performance engine in a car never turned on or put into gear.** Possessing the Holy Spirit without appropriating the power of the Holy Spirit.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- The same **FAITH** that brought Israel out of Egypt is the same **FAITH** that could/would take them into the Promised Land...Canaan.
- Obedience brings God’s **BLESSING**. Disobedience or even partial obedience brings His **DISCIPLINE**.
- The victorious **CHRISTIAN** life is an **EXCHANGED** life.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

~Galatians 2:20

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

~Philippians 1:21

Three categories of men!

- **Egypt**
- **In the wilderness**
- **In Canaan**

Which are you?