

## Division, Satan, Humility

### Atonement

John W. Ritenbaugh

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I hope that all of us are feeling at least some small measure of discomfort today. Some of us, perhaps, are feeling a *great* measure of discomfort—splitting headaches, emptiness in the stomach, or dryness in the mouth. We may be feeling a bit woozy or weak in the legs. However, God intends that we do feel some measure of discomfort on this particular day, because it was not intended to be physically comforting. It should be, however, *spiritually* comforting because of its significance.

In times past, I have occasionally mentioned that my preparation for this Holy Day message tends to meet with more resistance than the preparation for any other one. Sometimes it seems as though I am almost forcibly held up from finishing. There may be an unusual number of telephone calls that hinder me from concentrating on the Atonement subject or perhaps some other distraction. I have tried all kinds of different ways to get around it. I usually try to prepare the sermon at a time that is nowhere near the date of Atonement if at all possible. Even if I am preparing the sermon sometime in October, though, and try to get away from the rush around Feast time, somehow or another, these things seem to occur anyway. Today's message, however, was prepared a week or two in advance and I was able to muddle through all the distractions.

I think it is obvious to every single one of us that we live in a horribly divided world. I think, too, that the reason I have trouble preparing an Atonement sermon is the same reason that the world is so badly divided: there is someone tampering with the attitudes, conduct, and communication necessary to have a truly united world. It seems as though virtually every piece of news about which one reads or hears is met, in the media, with disagreement as to *why* that particular story is reported to the general public in the first place. We all listen to radio talk shows from time to time, and if there were ever a tragic witness as to how many varying opinions there are about any given subject—especially if political, monetary, or religious—we are going to find it there. In fact, there are so many different opinions that, if people were to hold to them, there *is no way* that there will ever be agreement; there is no way that people are ever going to be at one.

Galatians 5: 19-22 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Just look at these "works of the flesh" and take notice how many of them are, in actuality, elements of disagreement. Do people commit adultery because they agree with the one against whom they are committing adultery? Do people murder because they agree? No, there is disagreement there! How about people who are characteristically hostile, hateful, and contentious? There are two of them from the list right there. Jealousy—do people live in agreement with the one of whom they are jealous? Can people dwell together in unity when they are filled with such character flaws as outbursts of wrath (meaning sudden explosions of temper), selfish ambition (where the opponent, the competitor, the rival is run over in the rush to attain that which is desired), dissensions, heresies (opinions held by people that are against the orthodox thinking or against the doctrines), envies, drunkenness, and on and on?

These actions do not reflect the nature of God, and if one does any of these, then I would have to say that the person is unconverted—or converted but carnal and weak, as Paul said in I Corinthians 3)—and he is not being led by the Holy Spirit. It is possible for that to occur.

When we look into the Bible, we find not only a record of people being at variance with God, but also a record of the result of that disagreement. We are going to go back to the very beginning and take a number of scriptures, all of which appear in the book of Genesis, which will exemplify what I just said. We are going to see people at variance with God and we are going to see the results of that variance. Then we are going to understand why Isaiah said in Isaiah 59 that it is sin that separates us from God. We will never be at one with God as long as we are practicing a sin, or many sins, as a way of life.

I think we understand that we are being created in the image of God. I think that we understand, too, that if we are sinning, then we are not in the image of God. I am not talking about isolated sins that we do from time to time as a result of weakness. They are not ingrained in our character. I am talking about sins that are *dived*, sins that are practiced as a way of life and are, in fact, part of our very nature—part of our very character.

We are all familiar with the transgression of Adam and Eve. Here we see the result of sin:

Genesis 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Not only were Adam and Eve and their progeny separated from God and removed from dwelling with Him in the Garden of Eden, they were also separated from the source of life—the Tree of Life! The tragic results are very clear there for anyone to see! God simply and clearly expounds upon the result of sin. Next we have an example involving Cain and the curse coming upon him.

Genesis 4:12-14 "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

[Cain is separated, in effect, from mankind.] And Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! [He realized that this separation coming upon him was not something he was going to find very pleasant.] "Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me."

He is obviously concerned. There seems to be a measure of remorse in him, at least once he found out what the punishment was going to be—separation. We also find that God does not relent from what He wills to do.

Genesis 4:16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

Cain was sent into the land of "wandering." It is interesting that this day has something to do with someone who is going to have to be put into a wilderness area. The implication here is that this same someone is going to have to wander for a while. As mankind, through Cain, continues wandering their way upon the earth, a way apart from God, we find that

Genesis 6:11-13 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

The earth was not filled with violence because they *agreed* with one another! It is obvious that they were disagreeing with one another and the result was that they were separated. They were divided from life itself because of the tragic quality and quantity of their disagreements with God and with each other. I think that these scriptures are extremely interesting in that they fall right at the beginning of the Book. The narrative that God provides in the Bible *immediately* shows the effect of what Adam and Eve did—and the effect of their separation from God. People began to divide into camps. They were not only divided from God but from each other and the source of life itself!

Genesis 10:8-9 Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord."

The word *before* could very well be translated *against*. Nimrod was *against*; he was standing *before before* God—and it was not in a friendly way! We will leap ahead (in terms of years anyway) into chapter eleven. We understand that the antagonist here is none other than this same Nimrod—the one against God.

Genesis 11:6-9 And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Here were a people uniting themselves in disagreement against God, led by the arch-criminal who was trying to do all the uniting, Nimrod. This time, instead of wiping them out in death as He had done through the flood, God permitted them to live but segregated them by confusing their means of communication. So here they are separated from one another. All their glorious plans of building a great city and great tower had to be left off because they could not communicate with each other.

There is another tragic result from what happened in Genesis 11. All of these people who were scattered over the face of the earth were also separated from the holy line—a holy line that began with Shem. Actually, the line began with Seth and came down through Enoch to Noah and from Noah to Shem and from Shem to Abraham. These scattered people were, in fact, not only separated from that holy line, but they were separated, too, from God's Word. This was another tragic result of what they had done in their sin!

We will go from here all the way back to the New Testament and to the book of James.

James 3:13-15 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom [or we might say "gentleness"]. But if you have bitter envy [remember the works of the flesh] and self-seeking [we have two of them mentioned right here] in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

Now we see why there is so much division involved in sin. There is a demonic influence. Satan is clearly stirring people up against one another and against God. You had better believe that he

does not do it openly but influences them through the flesh to go in a certain direction. They have no defense against this, and the result is division among themselves and from God. "This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic."

James 3:16; 4:1 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there...[As we continue right into chapter four, the context of this discourse continues, and we find people *at war* with one another.] Where do wars and fights come from among you? [They do not come from agreement; they come from *disagreement*. They come from envy, self-seeking, and lust.] Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? [They come from sin!]

I think that this ought to set the stage for exactly *why* the Day of Atonement is needed—the day of at-one-ment, the state of being at one. It is needed because mankind is horribly divided from one another. There are those who are trying to pull the populations and the nations of the earth together as one, but this is going to be a failed attempt. It will utterly fail because this effort does not originate from God and is not being conducted in a godly manner. It is not being done by God or His Son, Jesus Christ, and is, instead, being done in a carnal way which will produce the exact same fruits that all of the other past efforts at unification have produced—division, destruction, and death! We are seeing, in one sense, a major worldwide attempt to bring the earth all together under one, anti-God system—even as it was attempted in Genesis 11. We read the tragic results of that.

We will again read in the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus.

Leviticus 23:27-32 "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people [separated from life]. You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath."

We are celebrating what I feel is the least understood and least appreciated of all God's Holy Cays. The world looks upon it as a curiosity. The Jews keep it as the most solemn day of the year. They, at least, realize that this day has solemn implications, but they do not know what

they are.

There is an interesting interpretation within this verse and it is found in the word *atonement*. The Hebrew word in this verse does not literally translate into *atonement*. The word, *kippur*, means "to cover." What the translators have done is to take *covering* and, instead, use a word describing the *effect* of being covered. The *covering* of our sins causes *atonement*. This is the implication and meaning that we derive from other verses. It is the forgiveness of sin—the *covering, covering* of the blood of Jesus Christ—that enables us to become at one with God.

Had this not been done, there would be no opportunity for us to be at one with God because our sins would still be a barrier between us. There would still be a separation between us and God. Because there was an atonement made by the blood of Jesus Christ, it bridges this gaping divide. Thus, the word *kippur* is interpreted into *atonement*.

The fact that this is a festival implies the act of eating and drinking in a convivial atmosphere. Though this Day of Atonement may be a festival, there is no eating or drinking permitted—at least physically. There is a reason we have trouble relating to this day, and it is because of the one who is, above all others, striving to hide its meaning behind a smokescreen of disinformation. He has tried to obliterate its significance in the minds of those who are aware of his existence.

If we were to mention the Day of Atonement to most Protestants or Catholics, they would look at us with a blank stare or give a shrug of the shoulder. To these people, the day has been, quite literally, obliterated. They would have no clue as to what we were talking about. To the Jews, Satan has obliterated its significance. They are aware of the day and that it has a solemn significance and is most holy, yet they do not understand what it means. I have looked into their commentaries and you cannot find what it means in there. It does not mean the same thing to them that the Bible teaches us that it means, and this is mainly because they do not believe in Christ nor, then, do they believe in His atoning blood. Therefore they cannot make the proper connection between the blood of Christ and the blood of the goat that is slain during the symbolic ceremony on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).

Let us pursue this—Satan's tactic of disinformation, misinformation, and obliteration. We will begin in Hosea.

Hosea 4:1-2, 6 Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. [Can you imagine that?] By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed...My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

Whether we think of this in terms of being a prophecy for those of ancient Israel during the time that they fell to their Assyrian conquerors or geared more toward us in a modern way, I think that it almost boggles the mind to be able to read such an evaluation in God's own words that "there is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land!" He is, undoubtedly, speaking in a generality. He does not mean that there is absolutely none at all because He has always made certain to provide a witness to His truth, mercy, and knowledge. There were always those who have been His true servants through all time. However, generally speaking, the things that He is saying here are true. What is truly mind-boggling is that this land, the United States of America, is dotted with churches from one coast to the other! We have an entire nation that is called the land in which God is trusted. We have this inscribed on our coinage, do we not? "In God we trust." Still He says here that there is no knowledge of God, no mercy, and no truth! We have it right there, yet God says, "This is not true! You are separated from Me! You do not know the truth about Me!" This is mind-boggling!

What we do have in the land is a great deal of confusion that is mistaken for knowledge about God. While there is a measure of truth, hardly anyone puts it in the right sequence leading us to the right answers. The result is a false image of God, and God can rightly say that there is no truth there. If the answer comes out false, is it truth? It cannot be both at the same time. There is no truth of God.

With what does this leave us? We are left with sectarianism. Do you know what sectarianism is? It is another word for division! Religions keep dividing, one after the other, because some groups consider part of the truth to be more important than all of the truth. Because the laws are not strung together properly, there is a breaking away that, inevitably, results in a new sect. We, too, have experienced this, have we not? We are caught up in this even now. It is a shame that it should occur, but it has occurred, nevertheless, because one group has gone completely away from the truth.

We will now turn to some New Testament confirmation of these principles. If you think that the prophecy in Hosea applied only to Israel just before they fell in 722 B.C., let us look ahead some 750 years to the time of the Apostle Paul.

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. [Obviously he considered them to be in a "lost" condition—or, at the very least, an "unsaved" condition. I think that would be more accurate.] For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. [Does that agree with Hosea? It agrees with Hosea exactly!] For they being ignorant [and incidentally, there are quite a number of translations that use *ignorant* ~~ignorant~~ the present progressive tense—*ignoring*—indicative of an ongoing, willful process. "For they *ignoring* God's righteousness..." This is a much stronger translation and shows the conscious life *choices* of a people who thought that they knew better than God.] and seeking to

establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

God accurately records that the Israelitish people had a zeal—but not according to knowledge. They were all confused. I think that the Apostle Paul before his conversion was probably the prime example of misdirected zeal. What did this zeal do to him? It so preoccupied his mind that it forced him to perceive Christ and Christians as enemies of the faith of his fathers. He was responsible for throwing a lot of them into prison and some were even put to death as a result of his zeal. He was so distracted by it that his mind could not tolerate somebody who thought a little bit differently from the way he did. God had to strike him down.

Even today Israel's land is dotted with church buildings, as I have already mentioned, and I think that the vast majority of these people are truly sincere. However, true knowledge is still lacking. The book of Romans reflects the Jewish proclivity toward self-justification on the basis of merit. There is a difference between the Israelitish zeal of today and the Israelitish zeal of the Apostle Paul's time. The zeal in Paul's time reflects—and I do say "reflects" (this is extracted from what Paul has written here in the book of Romans)—a belief that a person is capable of justifying himself before God on the basis of merit. In other words, as long as one did what they considered "good works," they were earning "points." If they were earning points, then God was obligated to mark this to their account and, therefore, owed them something.

Today's Israelites have gone all the way to the other side of the pendulum swing. They have largely thrown out responsibility to law and substituted a specious faith. Justification is by grace through faith, but that faith includes obedience to law, as Paul clearly shows. If the law has been done away, then there is no such thing as sin—but there is sin! James explains very clearly that the faith that is "living" obeys the royal law. Thus, the faith that justifies, or is the basis by which God will justify, is *anobedient* faith. Most of Protestantism does not believe that way. Theirs is a "just-as-I-am" faith.

Romans 11:1-3, 7-10 I say then, has God cast away His people?  
Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." [Then God had to show him that he was ~~not~~ alone; there were seven thousand who had not bowed their knee to Baal.]...What then, Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the elect have obtained it and the rest were hardened just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day." And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their

back always."

This little inset in verses eight through ten is important to understand. Israel has zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. God has not cast away His people. He is still going to save them, but He lets us know *why* things are the way they are. He has given them over to being deceived; He has permitted it. This is *why* it says that God gave them a spirit of stupor. He permitted it even as He permitted Adam and Eve to be tested in the Garden. These scriptures show that Israel's spiritual diet was what was misleading them. Their table had become a snare. A table is a symbol of where we eat. It is literally where we eat physical food, but spiritually, it is a symbol of that which is providing our mental and spiritual nourishment. What is he saying here? It was what they were feeding their mind that was so distracting them to the degree that they were not able to see the truth when it was presented to them.

II Corinthians 4:3-4 But even if our gospel is veiled [the spirit of stupor], it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

God has permitted this for His own purposes. We find this explained in Romans 9-11. However, Israel is contributing to it mightily!

I am going through this because I want us to be aware that, if we are not careful, we could just as easily fall into the same spiritual condition! That which we feed our minds can veil God's purpose from us. That which we feed our minds can prevent us from becoming at one with God because it will create confusion and uncertainty within our minds as to what is right and what is wrong. As a result, we will not be able to clearly see the right path and will fail, therefore, to make the right choices in life. If we do not make the right choices in life, then are we really going to be walking with God?

This is what happened to the Israelites. Their sincerity did not save them. If God and a person are walking side by side for a while, but on different paths, sincerity is never going to bring them together. This is a truth from the Bible. We are to worship God in spirit and truth. Sincerity is good; sincerity is wonderful. It is part of a true Christian's make-up—but sincerity will not stand on its own in creating and building a relationship with God. There are billions of sincere people out there who are, nonetheless, deceived because they are in a spirit of stupor and not even aware of it. Being religious is not enough. It is being religious and having and *following* the truth that matters. That is why I quoted from and used the example of the Apostle Paul as one who had zeal and sincerity but in his *misdirected* zeal threw people into prison and had them put to death—separating them from life, separating them from their loved ones. It takes both to produce a true and living faith.

Elijah was undoubtedly sincere when he uttered to God that he was all alone, but God straightened him out. "No, there are seven thousand others who are walking the same path as

you." He did not even know it. His sincerity did not reveal this truth to him. It was and is Israel's spiritual diet that is feeding their minds and misleading them so that they cannot come up with the right kinds of answers.

We find in Revelation 12: 9 that it is Satan who is deceiving the whole world. How is he doing this? I have a very interesting article from *Newsweek* Magazine dated August 30, 1982—eleven years ago. The subject of the article is Satan the devil and is entitled "Giving the Devil His Due." It is interesting in that it clearly demonstrates that people do not believe what the Bible says.

Saint Anthony wrestled with him; Luther taunted him; and Milton immortalized him in *Paradise Lost*. To Saint Paul, he was the god of this world. And he and his helpers figure in the New Testament twice as often as the Holy Spirit.

Can you imagine that? Do you think that there is nothing written about Satan? According to these carnal people, he appears in the New Testament twice as often as the Holy Spirit. I just recently read that *holy* is used in conjunction with *spirit* (indicating the Holy Spirit) upwards of ninety times. Apparently, Satan, Lucifer, demons, and things of this ilk appear somewhere around 180 times in the New Testament. Is that enough witness that Satan exists and that he is a real personality?

We are going to see from this article that even the churches no longer believe that he exists. No wonder he is able to pull this deception over on people. We are seeing how he is able to do it. No one believes what God says—it is that simple. It is not complicated. It goes right back to the first sin. Adam and Eve did not believe the simple instruction that God gave to them: "Eat this; do not eat that, because the day you do that you are as good as dead!" They did not believe it and they died. Because they died, they were separated from God.

He is, needless to say, the devil—next to Jesus Christ the most familiar figure in Christian lore. For all that, he is not what he used