



the
PLAIN TRUTH
a magazine of understanding

APRIL 1978

**WHO
INVENTED
SEX?**

**FROM TRADE WAR TO HOT WAR?
ON BECOMING AN ADDICT
HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED**



Personal from...

The One Great Goal in Life

A United States senator preached a sermon in a Methodist pulpit in Los Angeles. Of all things, imagine a well-known senator saying that patriotism is a false god to many people! And he is right.

“Love of country can transcend the love of God,” he said, “and we must, in time of stress, avoid making patriotism a religion.”

He said a number of other things I might have said myself. Among the idols professing Christians worship, he cited prosperity, science, patriotism, peace—and some people actually make an idol of the Bible, strange as that may sound. Some, he said, worship the Bible for itself, instead of valuing it for the information it contains: truths necessary for salvation, but also truths which guide to a complete way of life.

What is your idol? What are you really dedicated to? Is it earning a living—making money? What absorbs your mind, your thoughts, your time—what are you really devoted to? Is it God—above all else? Or is it your hobby, your wife or husband, your children, your home, your sports—or amusements and entertainments? What do you keep your mind on most of the time? What most occupies your interest? Is it friends—society? Is it people—or is it things?

It surely couldn't be God, could it? Probably not. And, if not, then it is an idol. You are breaking the first commandment. You have this other god before Him.

Just what is religion?

Is it merely an incidental interest, secondary to many other things, such as earning a living, your home, your family, your friends, hobbies, sports, entertainments? Possibly secondary to TV or movies?

Religion is your connection with God—your relationship with Him. Religion is realizing the PURPOSE of your life—the reason why God had you to be born, the reason you draw breath and exist, the purpose or ultimate goal of your life—and how to live that life so as to arrive there.

I have written of the seven laws of success. You may have the free booklet *The Seven Laws of Success* by

writing our office nearest you. They are really the seven laws of LIFE. They are the seven laws of RELIGION. Yet most people do not know, or practice, or apply, a single one of them.

The first is to have the RIGHT GOAL.

That goal—God's purpose for having put the breath of life in you—is that you be born of God, to share with Him the glory of creation, to inherit His divine nature, to be like Him—to do what He does, to accomplish what He accomplishes, enjoy what He enjoys—peace, happiness, joy, resplendent glory in life everlasting.

No other goal could be as great. It is superlative.

But what are you, now? Just a mass of matter, put together like a machine. Your present existence has to be constantly sustained. You have to keep drawing a breath of air into your lungs about every two or three seconds. You have to eat food on the average of three times every day. You have to take care of eliminating the wastes from digested food, and of bathing and cleansing your body. You have to maintain and sustain your physical body to keep on existing—and even then you are aging and degenerating every day and every year; the most certain thing in this existence we call “life” is that your machine is going to run down—you are going to die.

Actually, we have to simply keep pumping life into ourselves constantly—daily—to continue existing—to continue consciousness.

Yet most people keep on, day after day, year after year, pumping that existence into themselves, with no more purpose than to try to be comfortable, free from pain, and to please the five senses—with their minds on the passing physical and material things of the moment—things that are not lasting, and are soon gone.

Unless God's own CHARACTER is being formed and developed in your mind and your life, replacing the carnality that is there now, you shall have missed your goal. God's purpose is to create within you, during this life, a new and perfect character, so that you may be given eternal life—self-containing, inherent life.

If you are converted—that is, if you do once establish actual contact with God—He (Continued on page 40)

What Do You Mean... SALVATION?

Do you realize not one in a hundred knows what it is, how to get it, when you receive it? Don't be too sure you do! Here, once and for all, is the truth made so plain you will really understand it!

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Could you, yourself, answer these questions? If someone asked you to open your Bible and show him exactly where the Bible says salvation means going to heaven, could you do it?

Is salvation a place, a destination, a condition, a reward—or what? And where would you turn in your Bible to find it? Are you sure?

Could you open your Bible and show a questioner where it tells you *when* you receive salvation? Do you actually get it now, or when you die, or when Christ returns—or at some other time? This article will show you plainly.

Are you, at conversion, an inheritor, or a future heir—and just what do you inherit?

Religious people talk about “getting saved.” Yet even most religious

people understand no more of what the Bible teaches about salvation—the real meaning of the word “salvation”—than a certain young man did about another religious expression.

He said to me, “I gave my heart to the Lord at the revival meeting last night.”

“Well,” I said, “just what do you mean—you gave your heart to the Lord? Just how did you do that? Did you reach in your hand, take your heart out, and actually hand it to the Lord—and was He really right there, in person?”

“Well, uh . . . uh . . .,” he stammered, confused, “uh—well, no I didn't do that.”

“Then just what did you do? How did you give your heart to the Lord?” He stammered some more, then guessed he didn't know.

That's the way it is with a lot of people who say, “I got saved.” They don't really know what they mean by “getting saved.”

Do you know what the Bible teaches about salvation? Millions of sincere people have supposed they knew—yet have been deceived into accepting a false salvation.

I'm going to make it plain—from your Bible! So prepare yourself for a shock! And don't believe me—believe the Bible!

What Salvation Is

While the real truth must come from the Bible, the dictionary definition may help a little. Webster defines “salvation” as: “1. The saving of man from the spiritual consequences of sin; especially deliverance from sin and eternal

damnation. . . . 2. Preservation from destruction, failure, or other evil.”

Now we need to learn the Bible definition of sin, and to see what the Bible reveals the spiritual consequences to be. Whatever the consequences, Webster says salvation is to save you from them—and in this the Bible confirms the dictionary definition. Also salvation means preservation—and in this also, we shall see the Bible affirms the definition.

But why would you *need* to be saved from the spiritual consequences of sin? And why, if you are an immortal soul, do you need preservation from destruction?

What has this to do with you?

Suppose you say, “Look, I don’t go to church. I don’t pretend to be religious. Why should I be concerned with all these religious words like ‘sin’ and ‘salvation’ and ‘spiritual consequences?’”

Does this concern only religious people?

Why You Are Concerned

God Almighty, who designed, created, and sustains human life—including yours—says this: “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

That involves you!

Right now you probably have no conception of what is meant by “the glory of God” you have come short of. You’ll really open your eyes in astonishment when that is made plain to you.

But, whatever sin is, you have sinned. All humans have! Christ only is excepted. You are involved. And since salvation is saving man from the consequences of sin (and the Bible affirms this, as we shall see), let God’s Word tell you what the consequences are.

It is plain and simple. Here it is: “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

But why have you heard—and possibly believed—just the opposite? Look at that—read it in your own Bible! Notice! The wages you are going to be paid for having sinned—the consequence of sin—is death! Then why do so many religious

people teach exactly the opposite of the Bible: Why do they teach that the wages of sin is eternal life in hell?

Look at that again, in your Bible! On the one hand, the penalty is death. On the other hand, the gift is eternal life. The two are contrasted; it is one or the other—death, or eternal life.

Right here let me make very plain one thing the Bible teaches. A few persecutors have accused us of teaching “a salvation by works”—that is, that our “works” earn salvation. Let it be made clear and plain right here that your “works”—your evil works—do earn something, but it is not salvation. What they earn—the wages they earn—is death, and not salvation!

Further, let’s get this point straight and plain right here: Eternal life is not something you can earn; it is God’s *gift* through Christ!

But do you know that many actually deny that eternal life comes only as God’s gift by grace and through Christ? They say you already have eternal life. They say you are an “immortal soul”!

This is important! This is the crux of the whole question—of life, of the reason for existence! If you have an immortal soul—if you already have eternal life—then the Bible is not true when it says plainly eternal life is a gift from God. According to the Bible, what the “saved” receive as God’s gift through Jesus Christ is eternal life. Salvation then actually is the receiving of something you don’t now have: eternal life.

Yet a very popular teaching deceives people into believing they do not need to be saved from death by Christ’s free grace—by His shed blood. They say you do not need saving from death at all. They say, as Satan deceived mother Eve, that you will not surely die, that you are—or have—an immortal soul!

Why You Are Helpless

Why is it that religious people speak continually about “your immortal soul,” about “going to heaven,” about dead loved ones being now “with the Lord” and many other such things supposed to be the basic

beliefs of Christianity, and yet never once show you any such teaching in the Bible? They talk of these teachings as if they were true. They lead you to take these teachings for granted—to suppose they came from the Bible.

What does the Bible teach about the soul? Will you read it in your own Bible? Don’t take my word for it. Don’t believe me—believe God!

Read it in Ezekiel 18:4: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Yes, again, the wages of sin is death—that soul that sins shall die!

That truth about the soul is so important God caused it to be written twice. Turn now to Ezekiel 18:20: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Souls are not immortal. Your Bible says they can die!

But one who is deceived may say: “That doesn’t count because it’s in the Old Testament.” But read in the New Testament that all Scripture—all that Timothy had known from youth, which was the Old Testament—is given by inspiration of God (II Tim. 3:15-16).

Again, in the New Testament, Jesus Christ Himself said you should “fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [gehenna]”—a fire that will burn them up, cause them to die, destroy what is burned! Oh, yes, the Bible does teach that kind of hellfire—but not the kind where one burns forever and yet never burns up (Matt. 10:28). Let’s believe Jesus Christ when He says souls can be destroyed! They are not immortal!

What is a soul? Notice Genesis 2:7: “The Eternal God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Man *is* a soul. What was made of the dust of the ground became a soul. The soul was formed out of matter. The soul is not spirit. It is material, and can die.

This may come as a surprise: not only is it true that there is no such expression anywhere in the Bible as “immortal soul,” but the word “immortal” occurs only once in all the Bible—in I Timothy 1:17, where it refers to God. Further, the word
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Personal from...

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supernaturally puts within you His Holy Spirit. This impregnates you with His life—begets you as His child, actually yet unborn. Actually, what many professing Christians call “being born again” should be termed “being begotten.”

Technically, to be “born of God” means to be changed in composition from flesh and blood matter to spirit—no longer mortal, no longer human. But it does put within you a NEW NATURE. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17). You are, as Scripture says, given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be *partakers of the divine nature*” (II Peter 1:4).

This, then, becomes your very life!

You can only succeed if your goal is kept constantly—continually—before your eyes. When you drive a car, if you take your eyes and attention off what is in front of you (and sometimes coming from the side or behind) even for two or three seconds, you may find yourself “coming to” in a hospital, dying, and saying, “It all happened so suddenly!” Driving carefully means being alert—being diligent every second—keeping your eye and your mind and attention on the matter of driving—not on conversation or other things.

In the same manner, if you let other interests, material pursuits, steal first place in your mind and heart, even for a few days, you are inviting a spiritual smashup that will let you wake up being plunged into the lake of fire, which will mean eternal death.

That’s why God doesn’t want you to have these other gods before Him. For your own sake—in your own interest—you must keep Him enthroned and enshrined constantly ABOVE ALL. You must study His Word in order to be instructed by Him.

Instructed in what? Instructed in true knowledge—knowledge of God’s purpose for you, knowledge

of and about God, and knowledge of how to live. Jesus Christ said you must actually live by the words of the Bible. It is your GUIDE TO LIVING—your INSTRUCTION BOOK the Maker sent along to instruct you how to operate this mechanism that is you.

More, you must study His Word—your Bible—to find what you now believe that is wrong, and what you are now doing that is wrong and to be corrected and reproved by it.

True spiritual mindedness is not sticky sentimentalism. It is not the use of a certain religious phraseology, saying constantly, “Praise the Lord,” or, “Glory, hallelujah!” I have known many people whose talk is so very “spiritual”—but whose hearts were as far from God as the prophet Isaiah described.

You must study it to let it instruct you in the ways of God’s righteousness—His way of life. And then you must devote yourself to living it!

Still, without regular and constant prayer, you cannot maintain contact with God. And when that contact is broken, you are cut off from Him—and His spiritual life, love, and very nature cease flowing into you. For, understand, these divine attributes of His Spirit do flow! They are in motion. They do not stagnate. You either grow spiritually—in knowledge, in grace, in God’s character—or you deteriorate back toward becoming a mere physical animal, to die in eternal punishment in the lake of fire!

But if God, and the things of God—His revealed knowledge, His law, His love, His way for you to

live—are constantly foremost in your mind, your thoughts, your interest, then you are PRAYING ALWAYS—that is, in a constant spirit of prayer, a constant mental attitude of prayer. The contact with God must be perpetual!

This kind of Christian life—the only kind that truly is Christian—requires, as the Bible emphasizes repeatedly, zealous DILIGENCE. You must concentrate on it. You must be dedicated to it. It requires utter consecration. It requires total earnestness.

Yes, it requires the application of the other six laws of success—education, in which the Bible is the main textbook; good physical health; drive, or concentrated diligence and effort; resourcefulness; perseverance—endurance; and continual contact with, and the guidance, help, and power of God.

True spiritual mindedness is not sticky sentimentalism. It is not a certain emotional mood. It is not the use of a certain religious phraseology, saying constantly, “Praise the Lord,” or, “Glory, hallelujah!” I have known many people whose talk is so very “spiritual”—but whose hearts were as far from God as the prophet Isaiah described (see Isaiah 29:13).

Jesus Christ was a perfectly spiritual man, but He did not go about using such mushy language. He was not an effeminate, sentimental or emotional weakling. He was a strong, virile, masterful, yet kind and gentle man. He possessed leadership, strength, purpose, supreme strong will—and yet these masculine qualities of strength and power were perfectly blended with wisdom, judgment, knowledge, understanding, justice, and also patience, compassion and mercy. He was filled with peace, love, faith. And His will, strong as it was, was totally yielded and obedient to God. All this was the character of God.

He is our pattern. We must imitate Him—copy Him.

Look at the men of God in the Old Testament—Abraham, Noah, Joseph, David, Daniel, Elijah. They were all different from Christ in one respect—in which you and I are also different: They had human weaknesses, and all did sin. Yet these

men all repented and strove to overcome. But they were all men of strong purpose, strong will guided by God; all possessed leadership, but also love and faith and a consecrated obedience to the will of God. But they were not effeminate, sentimental men indulging in an affected, put-on, religious-sounding way of talking.

Look at the apostles Peter and Paul. They were the same. You don't find any of this pseudospirituality in them—yet they were truly spiritual men, devoted to obeying God and serving the needs of the people.

But one thing to watch and guard against every second is an attitude of resentment, bitterness, hatred. Don't let anything, no matter how unjust, make you sour and bitter. That is the deadliest mental and spiritual poison. We must love even our enemies who perpetrate the greatest outrages—though we do not condone their evils.

Remember what a glorious goal we have before us!

How grateful we ought to be! How our hearts ought to be flooded with love and gratitude to the Great God for His matchless love toward us. I'm sure we don't grasp what a supreme price He paid to make it possible. He wants us to be changed—to overcome and root out this debasing, rotten carnality—and to grow into His righteousness, that we may share His glory.

And, you know, I believe God wants and longs to share the supreme glory that He has with you! Make it your supreme overall life vocation, and work hard at it!

The Japanese spy who stealthily and secretly obtained all the information the Japanese needed to bomb Pearl Harbor said that he was not a very brilliant man, and learning came hard to him, but he worked hard, relentlessly, with zeal, and with purpose, and with diligence. He succeeded—with terrible destruction—in plunging the United States into World War II—and, finally, in the eventual defeat of his own nation.

Let us work hard at our calling and mission of being real Christians. We shall succeed, with God's help—in final and eternal glory! □

IS MAN ALONE?

(Continued from page 6)

about. We live in a very fortunate generation. Not only have we entered an era in astronomy when physical knowledge of the universe is expanding beyond our comprehension, but revealed knowledge about the true origins of man, the earth and the universe is increasingly becoming available to an ever growing number of people.

You are a spark of life in the universe. Your potential is truly awesome! You are a potential dynamo! But the physical universe of itself will not reveal the source of that great power to you. It has *already* been revealed by a Super Intelligence somewhere in the confines of outer space.

You see, there are intelligent creatures that occupy a different dimension in the cosmos. And these beings from outer space have visited this earth and have even left certain documents and records to prove it.

Popular writer Erich von Daniken

has written that the earth has had extraterrestrial visitors and that they have left definite indications of their visits, if only men would take the trouble to look at the evidence. But the records and documents I'm writing about do not have to be found in unexplored ruins deep in the jungles of Guatemala or Honduras. They do not have to be sought for in remote caves hidden in the Libyan desert.

More than likely you have a personal collection of these records and documents right there in your own living room. I think you know what particular Book I'm talking about.

Man's ultimate destiny lies in whether or not he gets into contact with the great Superior Being residing somewhere in outer space. If any person ever *really* makes that contact, it can change his whole life's direction.

If you wish to discover what this human life is all about, why there is a universe, and if spaceship Earth is a possible platform for future exploration into space, then write for our free article entitled "When a Man from Space Visited Earth." □



Why Were You Born?

To live, die, and ultimately go to heaven, hell, or someplace in between? Or to fulfill the most exciting, mind-boggling destiny imaginable? To find out, write for the free booklets *Why Were You Born?* and *Our Awesome Universe*.

See the inside front cover for the address of our office nearest you.



Why
were you
BORN?

Salvation?

(Continued from page 3)

"immortality" can be found only five times in all the Bible. In Romans 2:7 you will read it is something for us to seek. Of course! It is the gift of God, who has it to give! You don't need to seek for something you already have! In I Corinthians 15:53, and again in verse 54, immortality is something the saved shall put on at the time of the resurrection. In I Timothy 6:16 it speaks of the resurrected and glorified Christ, who only, of all who have been born human, has immortality. And finally, in II Timothy 1:10, immortality is something Jesus Christ brought to light—made possible for us to receive—through the gospel.

So the Bible teaches that the soul is not immortal, but is mortal, subject to death as the penalty of sin!

All have sinned. That includes you. The penalty is death! You do not possess eternal life from natural birth. Christ said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). So you are only mortal, material flesh. You are "of the earth, earthy" (I Cor. 15:47). The life you were born with is merely temporary chemical existence! You live by breathing air in and out of your lungs—the breath of life.

You are only one breath away from death—the cessation of the existence we call "life." If you don't draw that next breath, you can't keep alive or conscious ten more minutes. There is no immortal soul that will keep you alive and conscious. You are a soul (Gen. 2:7) that has sinned, and so shall die, unless saved from death by Christ's grace.

If your heart does not make that next beat, there is nothing in you to keep you alive ten minutes. You exist by breathing of air and circulation of blood—and are fed by food and water. You have only temporary chemical existence. You are like a clock wound up, and running down. You don't know at what second it will stop!

You can't give yourself any life beyond this dwindling chemical

existence. There is no eternal life inherent in you. Nothing you can do will produce it, supply it, or earn it. You can't get it by your own works!

What your own works have done is earn for you the penalty of death. And it is eternal death—eternal punishment!

It is not "eternal punishing" in life but eternal punishment in death (Matt. 25:46). Notice, Jesus said the punishment, death, is to last forever— "everlasting punishment." Again, in II Thessalonians 1:9, speaking of those who reject God's salvation, they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction." The punishment is not *life* in torture but *destruction* to be final, total, forever.

God—and only God—has immortality! Instead of assuming carelessly the pagan teaching of the "immortality of the soul," turn again to I Timothy 6:16 and read it with your own eyes in your own Bible! The risen Christ, and He only of all who were born human, has immortality. God has immortality—life inherent—in Himself (John 5:26). He has given to the Son, Jesus Christ, also to have life in Himself. And only God can impart eternal life to you! It comes through Christ.

But how are you going to go to God? Your past sins not only have condemned you to the penalty of death, they also have put a total barrier between you and God. They have cut you off from all access to God!

Read it! See it in your own Bible: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2).

How Should You Seek God?

So how, when this barrier stands between you and God, are you going to go to Him to obtain eternal life?

Again Isaiah answers: "Seek ye the Eternal while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.

... For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Eternal" (Isa. 55:6-8).

So now you seek God that you may obtain eternal life from Him. You repent! You forsake your way of life, and turn to God's way—or at least you think you do. But something is still lacking! You still are cut off! The barrier is still there! Do you know why?

At this point we need to stop and find out what is meant by that word "sin."

Haven't you honestly been a bit confused by this religious terminology? You hear people talk about "sin," "getting saved," "under law," "under grace," "justification," "sanctified," "heaven," "hell," "predestination," and dozens of other terms. Haven't they been pretty vague to you—rather meaningless? Do you know that most religious people who use all these terms usually don't know any more than you do what they really mean?

What Do You Mean—Sin?

We started by quoting the scripture "All have sinned." We said that included you!

But what is sin? Why, when men preach, don't you hear that explained, defined, made clear and understandable? Why are these religious terms used most of the time loosely, vaguely, meaninglessly?

Once, in Springfield, Oregon, a young man with a Bible in his hand accosted me on the street. An evangelist had come to town and pitched a tent. He brought with him a "gospel team" including some eight young men of college age, who roamed the streets carrying Bibles, stopping people and inviting them to attend the services. One stopped me.

"Well now," I said, "does your evangelist teach that Christ saves us from sin?" He assured me he did.

"Well, what I want to know," I persisted, "is what I have to quit doing or what I have done that you call 'sin.' Just what is 'sin'?"

"Well," he answered, "Christ died for our sins."

"But that doesn't tell me exactly

what I've done that Christ had to die for," I insisted. "What is 'sin'?"

"Christ died for our sins," came the reply.

"Yes, I know—you said that before. But what is this thing, 'sin,' that He died for? What do I have to quit doing? Can you open that Bible you have and show me the Bible definition of the word 'sin'? Is there a place in the Bible where it gives a plain definition—where it says 'sin is'—and then in plain words tells what it is?"

He called to a second of the young men—then a third, and a fourth. Finally, with a large crowd gathering, they called the evangelist himself. But even he could not—or would not—turn to the Bible answer! One by one, the evangelist and his team all slunk away!

Then I took a Bible out of my briefcase, turned to I John 3:4, and read to the crowd: "Sin is the transgression of the law."

But what law? This is explained in Romans 7. So next I read: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law"—or, in the plain-er English of the Moffatt translation: "Why, had it not been for the Law, I would never have known what sin meant!" In other words, the law defines sin. Sin is breaking the law. But what law? Continuing, same verse: "... for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

There we are told plainly what law it is sin to transgress. It is the law that says: "Thou shalt not covet." And that is a direct quote from Exodus 20:17, where the Ten Commandments are being given. That law is the Ten Commandments. It is sin to break any of the Ten Commandments.

In verses 12 and 14 of this same seventh chapter of Romans you will read that the law is holy, just and good, and that it is a spiritual law—a law of spiritual principles of living!

Of course, the whole spiritual law may be summed up in the word "love." This may be divided into the two great commandments: love toward God, and love toward neighbor. The first four of the Ten Com-

mandments tell us how to love God; the last six, how to love neighbor. The whole Bible elaborates, showing the principles involved, until it includes the entire right way of life!

Now notice Romans 3:20. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Of course! A deceived popular teaching to the contrary notwithstanding, that is precisely what we teach. Keeping the law by one's own efforts will not justify anyone. We have all sinned. We cannot justify this guilt we have incurred, we cannot avoid the wages we have earned—death—by obedience, goodness, works, or anything we can do.

God's Spiritual Mirror

Let's make that very plain! Most women carry a mirror in their purses. A woman takes out her mirror, steals a glance at her face, discovers dirt on it. Does she try to wash off the dirt with the mirror? Ridiculous? Yes, of course. Looking into the mirror won't cleanse the dirt already there. Why? Because by the mirror comes the knowledge that the dirt is there! Now God's law is His spiritual mirror. Your Bible says so—plainly (James 1:22-25). You look into God's law. It shows you the spiritual dirt on your heart. To hear God's Word, which corrects, reproves and rebukes (II Tim. 3:16), and then do nothing about the spiritual dirt it reveals, is like a man beholding his face in a mirror, seeing the dirt, gaining knowledge of it, then forgetting how dirty he is—doing nothing about it.

God's law is His spiritual mirror. But keeping yourself from becoming more dirty today does not wash off the dirt already there. By being careful to incur no penalty today, you do not erase the penalty incurred yesterday and all the days previously. So, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Why? Because "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Of course!

Sin is "the transgression of the law." Paul would not have known it was sin to lust, except the law had

said, "Thou shalt not covet." The function of the law is to tell us what sin is—not to cleanse us of yesterday's sin or erase the penalty of last year's sin.

There can never be a law, unless there is a penalty for its violation. And, "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15), and there could be no penalty—no punishment. If the wages—the punishment—of sin is death, and death is the penalty, then there is a law. And if there is no law being broken, there is no transgression and no penalty—and then we need no Savior—no salvation from the punishment.

Now where did the law come from? Again through James, God says, "There is one lawgiver" (James 4:12). That is God. God set in motion many laws—laws of physics and chemistry among them. The great law of love is a spiritual law. It is the way of peace, of happiness—of right relationship with God and with human neighbor. It is inexorable—a living law as much fixed and in motion as laws of gravity and inertia.

This spiritual law was set in motion by a loving God to provide the way to every desired good: peace, happiness, prosperity, security, abundant life. To break it is to turn in the opposite direction from peace, happiness, security, abundance, and toward strife, fear, worry, unhappiness, suffering, death. The final wages you earn traveling that way is death! For eternity! Eternal punishment!

Yes, the wages of sin is death. But we have hope! The gift of God is eternal life.

So now, where are we? Eternal life can be had only from God. So, as stated above, you seek God. But you find a tremendous, impenetrable barrier: the sins you have committed. Until they are justified you have no access to God.

My next article on this subject will tell you exactly how justification occurs—what God has done on your behalf, and just what your part is in claiming the promise of salvation. □

(To Be Continued)