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"The Darkness"

Larry Steers

There is a strange unsettling fear which often floods the souls of mortal men and women when encompassed by supernatural events. Supernatural is defined in a dictionary as "seemingly beyond the powers or laws of nature, therefore miraculous".

But scripture records happenings far beyond anything which may be embraced by the by the this definition word supernatural. These happenings caused great fear to fall upon men.

When our Lord was crucified terrifying events began to unfold. Matthew tells us of an earthquake and rending rocks beneath the feet of men (Matt. 27:51). He also is the only New Testament writer who indicates, "the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many"(Matt. 27:52 -53). Again, only Matthew tells us of a great earthquake (Matt. 28:2) when the Lord arose. These moments caused the centurion and they that were with him "to fear greatly" (Matt. 27:54).

The synoptic Gospels record the darkness and the rent veil while John's Gospel omits all these proceedings.

Matthew tells us about the ninth hour when we read, "Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli lama sabachthani?", (Matt. 27:45 - 46) while Mark writes, "Eloi, Eloi, la ma sabach thani?" (Mark 15:34). John pierces the heavens with the seventh cry of the Lord from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30) and Luke writes, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit" (23:46).

Let us consider the three solemn hours of darkness which settled upon the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour.

Following the Lord's Supper an older brother commented, "the brethren never took us to the hours of darkness this morning". Reflecting on the Breaking of Bread that morning, we did hear many beautifully expressed references to the birth of our Lord, his words and miracles during his earthly sojourn, the cross and his resurrection. But the brother was correct, we never touched the darkness.

The Jewish day and night were divided into watches of three hours each. The first watch of the day commenced at sunrise, 6 AM, and continued until 9 AM. The second watch was from 9 AM and continued to 12 noon. The third watch was from 12 to 3, and the fourth from 3 to 6 (sunset). Following is an attempt to equate the watches to our time.

Mark records "And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him" (Mark 15: 25), the third hour being 9 AM, during the first watch. Our Lord hung on the cross for three hours during the second watch , from 9 AM to 12 noon. In those three hours the soldiers, the high priest and the thieves ridiculed and mocked. They gambled for His garments. He was the song of the drunkard.

The darkness came during the third watch from 12 noon to 3 PM, (Matt. 27:45).

Remember that just prior to His crucifixion the Lord had told His disciples, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). We must remember that when looking at the Passover we are dealing with a lunar month. The new moon will come at the first of the month and the full moon in the middle of the month. For example, the Passover in Egypt came on the fourteenth day of the first month (Ex. 12:2, 6). The Children of Israel when leaving the land of Egypt would have a full moon to give some light for their journey.

The Feast of the Passover was to be observed yearly at the same time (Lev. 23:4). Again, in the lunar calendar the new moon

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Thank you

comes at the first of the month and the full moon near the middle of the month..

With this before us, back to the darkness.. While some attempt to explain the darkness as a solar eclipse, this attempt is in error.

First a solar eclipse can never occur at the Passover when there is always a full moon.. A Solar eclipse can only occur when the moon comes between the Sun and the Earth. It can only happen during a new moon and is impossible when the moon is full. A full moon occurs when it is on the opposite side of the earth from the sun and at that time the disc of the moon is illuminated by the Sun as seen from the earth. When the moon is lined up between the Earth and the Sun, the part of the Moon that is illuminated is towards the Sun and away from the Earth so it appears dark or "new" to us. If the alignment is right there is an eclipse. An eclipse occurs during a new Moon but never during a full Moon. The Passover is always during the full Moon.

But secondly, an eclipse of the sun lasts for a few minutes at most. The darkness lasted for three hours.

Thirdly, Luke explains the darkness with the words, "the sun was darkened" (23:45). The words clearly imply a darkness settled, not gradually, not a slow process, but suddenly the light went out. This was a total darkness. The hymn writer beautifully expresses this with the words:

"Well might the sun refuse to shine and
shut His glories in,
When the incarnate maker died for man
His creatures sin."

But the darkness was not a local area centering on the crucifixion for the whole world was darkened. (Matt. 27:45, Luke 23:44).

The writers of the New Testament make only brief references to these solemn hours. Paul touches them with the words, "He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin " (2 Cor. 5:21) and, "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. 8:23).

Peter was an eye witness of the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 2:23). He is referring to what he saw for a brief moment as the Lord stood silently before sinful men. But Peter writes about what he never saw, referring to

the darkness, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God" (1Peter 3:18). Those were the sufferings in the darkness which no human eye could pierce.

The Old Testament in so many passages draws near to those hours.

David wrote, "Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psa. 37:25). What David had never seen he writes about. He takes us into the darkness when he writes about a righteous man crying, "My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Psa. 22:1). He writes about one who was poured out like water, whose bones were out of joint, and His heart like wax (Psa. 22:14) And again "The waters are come in unto my soul" (Psa. 69:1). He writes about the deep mire and the overflowing flood.

Isaiah 53 takes us to the cross and reminds us, "With His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). Those were not the terrible marks left by the merciless, ruthless, violent Roman scourge, but the far more solemn stripes of Divine judgment that He bore in the darkness. Those three hours bring us to the crisis of the eternal ages. The hours that are so profound and so beyond human comprehension. We must be filled with reverence like Moses and remove our shoes for we stand on holy ground.

Again no human eye has or can pierce that darkness. Perhaps God has given us a little indication of those hours when Abraham reached the mountain where Isaac was to be offered as a burnt sacrifice. The young men were instructed to stay at the foot of the mountain. Why? They knew the love of Abraham for Isaac, and could never comprehend Isaac on an altar and Abraham with the sacrificial knife about to offer the son he so dearly loved. What God spared Abraham He did not spare Himself, He not only gave as a sacrifice the Son He loved, but opened the flood gates of His wrath upon His Son.

In describing those three hours Jeremiah has written, "From above hath he sent fire into my bones and it prevaieth against them" (Jer. 1:12). Again the prophet Zechariah looking down the centuries of time inscribes in the eternal record, "Awake O sword against my shepherd and against the man that is my fel-

low". The sword was the sword of Divine judgment, and is stirred to activity by God commanding it to awake. Our God, looking upon the cross calls the Son "my fellow". This must be one of the most precious references to the man on the cross which moves our souls to bow in worship. "My fellow" means "my companion, my united one, my equal"

Anne Cousins penned the most significant words no doubt with Zechariah in mind:

"Jehovah bade His sword awake;
O Christ, it woke gainst Thee!
Thy blood the flaming blade must slake,
Thy heart its sheath must be;
All for my sake my peace to make,
Now sleeps that sword for me.

Again, over the head of the scapegoat of Leviticus 16, Aaron confessed all the sins of the Children of Israel thus transferring them to the head of the goat. The goat was led by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. Away and away and away from the camp of Israel to "a land not inhabited" (Lev.16:22). There would be none to care for the goat. It was alone bearing the sins of Israel. Like the type, in the darkness, the Lord entered an uninhabited land. None passed that way before Him and none ever will. In that uninhabited land, in that darkness, the sword awoke and the wrath of God unsparingly, in its total fullness fell upon the sin bearer.

Surely each redeemed by precious blood will sing reverently and tearfully:

"O wondrous hour, when Jesus Thou,
Co-equal with the eternal God,
Beneath our sins didst deign to bow
And in our stead didst bear the rod."

Thank God that full payment for sin has been made and will not be twice required. The work has been perfectly completed. The Lord of glory who passed through the darkness, was tenderly removed from the cross by Joseph and Nicodemus, and carefully laid in a garden tomb. But "if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the seal of the great work of redemption.

Come to that great day of atonement already referred to in Lev. 16. The scapegoat was led by the hand of a Fit man into the wilderness. Of this man we know not his tribe or his family. "Fit" means he was a qualified

man for a most important responsibility; to lead the goat bearing the sins of the nation far away into the wilderness so that it could never return. The goat beautifully tells us of the perfect sin bearer. But there are two types of the Lord here. Not only the goat but the fit man. How solemn that if the fit man does not return atonement has not been accepted. The fit man returning speaks beautifully of the Lord returning from the sepulcher and showing Himself alive by many indisputable proofs.

Our Savior lives!

But surely we must linger here with our souls overwhelmed with thanksgiving and worship. Tarrying to meditate further on the "darkness".

First, the measure of our deep sinful guilt is the distance and depth of our Lord being forsaken. That distance is the measure of God's holiness.

What a Savior!

*"No silver did she have nor gold,
Just two mites;
'Twas all her living we are told,
Just two mites.
She gave them both without a grudge,
And o'er the treasury sat the Judge;
Than all the rich she gave far more,
For they gave from their
bounteous store.
Thus ye who have a meager share
Of this world's goods, do not despair;
With what you have do what is right,
And this will give your Lord delight.
He loves the cheerful giver still,
O give to Him your heart and will,
Just two mites."*

Intolerance in a "Tolerant" Society

Joel Portman

Anyone reading the news today would be aware of the conflicts that exist between those who call themselves "liberal", or tolerant, and those of the opposite view. It is interesting to consider what the word "liberal" actually means. When words had meaning, "liberal" meant one who was open to new behavior or ideas, one who was willing to accept the fact that others differed from them in convictions and practices. It signified generosity, openness, and tolerance of others. We understand a liberal person as one who was not opposed to those with different views than theirs.

However, as is always the case, words change over time, along with the characteristics of those who are so identified, so that in our era of time, those who dub themselves liberal are those who are opposed to anything, anyone, or any expression that offends or is contrary to their particular mindset or viewpoint. It is remarkably evident that those who are engaged in radical opposition to others, who violently protest in our streets, or who demand "safe" spaces where they can be free from any offending element, are those who would self-identify as "tolerant" persons. By that they mean that they are tolerant, but only toward anyone who shares their particular beliefs or practices and who is willing to accept them with their accompanying baggage, regardless of whether or not their own behavior and expressions offend the other person. They want others to be tolerant of them, but not the reverse. This is an evidence of an adolescent society composed of individuals who have never learned that the world doesn't revolve around them, their mores, or their selfish desires. Being in this condition indicates that their proclaimed "rights" and beliefs are not quite so secure as they think they are, even in their own mind.

Much has been written on the subject of what the believer's attitude should be toward those who insist on maintaining a lifestyle involving practices that are contrary to the Scripture as well as against societal norms. We must sympathetically see these persons as

examples of the work of the devil to deceive the heart and blind the mind to the extent that they call evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20). They are those "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:4). This expects a reaction on our part much like that which the Lord Jesus displayed in His life. He showed the kindness and mercy of God toward sinful individuals, religious or otherwise, but didn't hesitate to expose their sinfulness and God's attitude toward it. This is hard to carry out practically, and inevitably results in fierce opposition, but we must seek to have the mind of Christ in all of our attitudes and activities of life.

However, the believer is not called upon to change the politics or morals of this world by agitation, marches, protests, or by other means that are normally used. We are in this world to represent Christ and His truth in the gospel, the only element that has the essential power to completely change man's mind and life. Outward conformity to Christian principles may be good, but it leaves the individual sinner still in sins and separated from God. It may even make that person worse than before, since the act of reformation may serve to soothe the mind and prevent their recognizing their need. Paul never entered a city during his ministry with the intention of changing the majority socially, morally, or politically. Rather, he entered it, depending on the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:1-3) to work effectually in the salvation of souls. This would result in the change in the life and behavior of those who believed the message. He writes in Romans 1:17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The antagonism of liberal persons today is not only directed against the practices that are expressed in God's Holy Word. That antagonism is ultimately against God's right and authority, with man determined to eject God from his life and conscience, so that he alone is his own god. This was the primary lie of the devil in Gen. 3, and it has never ceased to be the ambition of men in his sins. We remember

the portion of the poem, "It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll; I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." (W. E. Henley). It is the prevailing attitude of many whose expressions one reads in news and commentary. In their statements, discerning Christians recognize the underlying rebellion of the human heart against God's authority. Believers must guard against allowing this kind of attitude to prevail in our thinking, whether in personal life, or in spiritual matters individually or in the assembly. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," (Phil. 2:5), "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Rom. 12:2). We are called by God, regenerated by the work of Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit so that we might live lives that are separated to Him and which display our subjection to His will.

According to God's Word, and judging from presently developing attitudes of mankind, we can and should expect opposition to Biblical values to increase along with every other expression of antagonism toward anything involving Divine authority. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived," (2 Tim. 3:12-13). Many other references abound that would warn us of the expected conditions in last days prior to our Lord's return. That attitude will never change, even under the clear display of God's judgments that will be poured out on the world during the tribulation period, when we read that men will blaspheme God and continue to breathe out their antagonism against God and His Christ (Ps. 2:1-3, Acts 4:26, Rev. 16:9, 11, 21). So that only a firmly established confidence in God's Word and the constancy of practicing its truth and principles will preserve a child of God in that environment. In Matt. 7:24-27, it is not the one who knows the truth that Christ taught, but it is the one who does them. "Doeth" indicates the constant practice that distinctly marks such a believer from those who know but do not practice. The knowing and doing is the foundation that is established upon the solid

rock, instead of the shifting sands of opinion. May God help us to be "doers of the Word, and not hearers only." (James 1:22).

Intolerance among Believers

It is sad when the same form of mindset creeps in among believers and affects the character of their fellowship. We learn from different passages of our New Testament that in a local assembly setting, there is great need to recognize differing convictions and practices, allowing for them within the limitations of the revealed Word of God. In Romans 14, Paul deals with believers who had formed two sides of a conflict that resulted in their condemning or judging one another. It's hard to see how true fellowship could exist in that setting, assuming that both were equally determined that their viewpoint was the correct one. Leaving aside the issues that were involved (that resulted from what they had learned in their past or arrived at in their understandings), Paul emphasizes that they must have a willingness to receive one another (14:1). This verse doesn't apply to assembly reception, but to openness to others within an assembly so that the believers recognize the importance of their "brethren" (vs. 10, 13, 15). This is dealt with in very clear detail that should be considered in another article. But the principle is emphasized that one must be willing to curtail one's own practice if it will impinge on the spiritual welfare of a brother in Christ, or if it might adversely affect the fellowship between brethren.

Believers can become intolerant of others who don't share their particular conviction. To maintain that attitude, when not clearly enunciated in God's Word in precept or principle, is to declare that my view is right and the other is wrong. Paul says in v. 22, "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God." One doesn't need to compromise personal convictions in order to warmly accept and appreciate those who think differently. Rather, we should look for ways in which we can help those, if we think that they are wrong, and we can do that by maintaining an attitude of appreciation for other saints while looking for ways to kindly seek to correct them if they are wrong.

It is sad that even today, similar tensions can exist in an assembly and that they

can eventually cause a division. There can be tension between those who want to introduce language or practices into assemblies that violate long-held and deep-seated convictions of older believers. Younger saints can denigrate the older ones and ridicule their concerns and attitudes. Older ones may judge and condemn the younger. Some want to introduce common language in their public prayers and justify it on the ground that King James English is no longer the practice. In some ways, they may be correct, but on the grounds of consideration of my brethren, one needs to take their concerns into account. Older believers might be right! Some want to imitate the practices of other, more liberal assemblies, or even follow what other churches have done, things that seem to have worked in their case to bring others into contact with believers. This would include neighborhood "fun days," and different forms of social involvements, which in themselves may not be wrong. In some cases, assemblies have been divided because elders insisted on receiving someone into the assembly who the believers couldn't receive in good faith. Elders are not dictators; they are to be shepherds of the flock who care more for the welfare of the saints in the fellowship than for others who want to be received. Actions that violate the conscience or principles of others can be most detrimental. Whether younger or older, Scripture would teach us that consideration of others and toleration of their contrary views should be our exercise, assuming that we are acting within the confines of the revealed Word of God.

We tend to judge and condemn others on the basis of our own personal criteria. However, even those believers who cannot agree with our own activities must be considered, even if eventually they are ignored or overruled. We are aware of some faithful saints who are no longer in assembly fellowship, because they were removed from that fellowship by those who would no longer tolerate their exercise to maintain scriptural practices. There are assemblies today where tension exists between younger Christians who want to introduce changes into the assembly that others are not willing to accept. This is sad and it causes immense stress in the hearts and lives of such saints who have devoted their lives to assembly

principles and who have enjoyed that fellowship for years. Only the Lord fully knows the resulting harm that intolerance can produce among believers.

We cannot tolerate sin, especially that which calls for assembly discipline, but there needs to be a latitude that allows for variance in personal convictions and consideration of those held by others. This is one purpose of an assembly fellowship; the interaction with other saints develops the gracious spirit that should exist in each child of God. The old saying is true today, "To dwell above with saints we love, that will be glory. To live below with saints we know, that's a different story."

Faith is the champion of grace, and love, the nurse; but humility the beauty of grace. Humility is the ribbon, or string that ties together all those precious pearls the rest of graces. If this string break they are all scattered.

One of the ancients used to say that humility is the first, second and third grace of a Christian. An humble soul is like the violet that by its fragrant smell draws the eye and hearts of others to him.

"Sin" and "Sins."

F. B. Hole.

We have no love for theological hair-splitting, and we shall certainly not be guilty of it in carefully distinguishing between these

two things. Though closely connected, there is an important difference between them.

Both are mentioned in one verse of Scripture, Rom. 5:12. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

"Sin" is that which at the fall of Adam gained an entrance into the world. Just as the poison of a snake, once injected into a man's body, will run through his whole system doing its deadly work, so sin - the virus of that old serpent the devil - has permeated man's moral being to his ruin. The result of this is "all have sinned." "Sins," of thought, word, or act, whether of omission or commission, are chargeable to each of us.

"Sin," then, is the root principle, "sins" the shameful fruits that spring therefrom.

This being granted, let us go a step further and ask, What exactly is this "sin" which has entered into the world?

1 Jn. 3:4 answers this point, but, unfortunately, it is one of the verses where our excellent Authorized Version leads us astray. The one Greek word translated by the phrase "transgression of the law" really means "lawlessness," and is so translated in other Versions. The verse, then, should run thus, "Whosoever committeth sin practices lawlessness; for sin is lawlessness."

There is an immense difference between these two things. "Transgression of the law" is, indeed, the breaking of a clear-cut commandment. There can be no transgression of the law where there is no law to transgress. There was no law in the world from Adam until the days of Moses, hence there was no transgression and sin was not imputed; yet sin was there in awful malignancy, and death its penalty was there. This is just the argument of Rom. 5:13, 14.

What, then, is lawlessness? It is simply the refusal of all rule, the throwing off of all divine restraint. The assertion of man's will in defiance of God's. Sin is just that. Such was the course to which Adam committed himself in eating the forbidden fruit. How bitter the results!

Instead of being like a planet, shining with steady light, and moving evenly onward in its orbit, controlled by the sun, man has be-

come like a "wandering star," pursuing an erratic course he knows not where; though Scripture significantly says "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jud. 1:13).

Instead of being master, he is mastered by the evil thing to which he has yielded himself. Sin has dominion over him and continually breaks out into sins. And, sad to say, it exerts such a deadening and stupefying influence upon the conscience that sinners seem unconscious of their plight apart from the grace of God.

When God's grace does act, and the Spirit works in life-giving power in a soul, the first cry is that of need and pain. The past years rise up before it, burdening the conscience. SINS become the question of the hour, and the trouble does not cease until the value of the precious blood of Christ is known and the soul can say, "My sins are forgiven me for His name's sake."

Then, afterwards - this is undoubtedly the experience of most believers - the question of SIN is raised. We discover that though our sins are forgiven, the root principle from which the mischief springs is still within us. What is to be done with that? This is a question indeed.

It is something gained if we discern that SIN lies at the root of our troubles. Some Christians seem to be too much occupied with the fruit to consider the root.

Some years ago a youth approached an elder Christian, complaining that in spite of all his prayers and efforts sins were continually creeping into his life and behavior. SINS, SINS, was the burden of his cry!

"Upon what tree do apples grow?" was the only answer he got.

"Why, an apple tree," said the astonished youth. The question seemed so ridiculously irrelevant.

"And on what tree do plums grow?"

"On a plum tree." His astonishment deepened!

"And on what tree do sins grow?" was the next question.

A pause. Then, with a smile, he said, "On a sin tree, I should think."

"You are right, my lad," said this friend. "That's just where they do grow."

Note the point. The sins that we Christians have to deplore and confess are not little isolated bits of evil foreign to us, inserted somehow into our lives by the devil. Their cause lies much deeper. They spring as fruit out of that which is within us. Sin is within us. Let no man say otherwise when Scripture says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:8).

What, then, is the remedy for SIN? The answer is, in one word, DEATH. Death, or better still, the resurrection change, which will be the portion of us, who are alive and remain when Jesus comes. It will end sin as far as we are concerned, absolutely and for ever. The last trace of its presence in us will then be gone. Every Christian looks on in the happy anticipation of that. Do we all as joyfully look back to the hour when death the great remedy came in - the death of Jesus?

"In that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God" (Rom. 6:10).

The matter, therefore, stands thus: He died FOR our sins, atoning for them; He died TO sin, and therefore taught by the Spirit we recognize that we are identified with our great Representative, and faith appropriates His death as ours. We, too, then, are "dead to sin," and cannot any longer consistently live in it (see Rom. 6:2). We therefore reckon ourselves "to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

There is just this difference: the sin to which He died was purely an external thing. "In Him is no sin" (1Jn. 3:5). With us it is not only external, but internal too. Sin is the ruling principle of the world without us; it is also, alas! the ruling principle of the flesh within.

But there is more than this. The death of Christ was not only our death to sin, but it was the total condemnation of the sin to which we died. Rom. 8:3 runs, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin [margin] condemned sin in the flesh." At the Cross SIN, in its full hideousness, stood revealed, for lawlessness reached its flood-tide height then; and in that holy sacrifice its judgment was borne, and its condemnation expressed.

Let these distinctions, then, be carefully noted. Sins have been borne and their judgment exhausted. Sin has been exposed and condemned, and to it we have died in the death of Christ. The Cross was all this and more. What heavenly wonders encircle it! How does it stand alone, unapproached and unapproachable!

". . . the Tree

Center of two eternities

Which look with rapt adoring eyes

Onward and back to Thee."

We read in Joh. 1:29 of "the sin of the world," and in Rom. 8:3 of "sin in the flesh." Is there any difference between these two? and how do you distinguish them from the sins of an individual?

The expression "sin of the world," in Joh. 1:1-51, is about as comprehensive as can be. Sin, the root of it, and every offshoot, down to its finest ramifications in the world, is to be taken away by the Lamb of God. His Cross is the basis of it, and He Himself will do it, as foretold in Rev. 19:1-21; Rev. 20:1-15; Rev. 21:1-27.

"Sin in the flesh" is somewhat different. Sin is, of course, the same in essence wherever it is found in the universe of God, whether in demons or men, but as far as this world is concerned "the flesh" - the old fallen nature of the children of Adam - is the great vehicle in which it resides and works, producing sins in individuals universally.

Picture to yourself an immense electric power station. Imagine a whole network of live wires, quite unprotected, radiating in every direction from it all over a vast city. Shocks, consternation, death, would be in every direction!

Sin is something like the subtle and indefinable electric fluid making its influence felt in every direction.

The flesh is like the wire, the seat of the electricity, and the vehicle through which it acts. Sins are like the shocks dealt out in every direction, resulting in death.

The sin of the world is like the whole concern, wires, electricity, power-station and all! A clean sweep of the hateful thing will be made. Such is the value of the Cross. Well might John say, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

We commonly speak of the forgiveness of sins. Might we not as correctly speak of the forgiveness of sin?

No; for Scripture does not speak so. Forgiveness of sins is found continually in the Bible, forgiveness of a sin, too, forgiveness of sin, the root principle, Never!

A simple illustration may help. A mother is greatly tried by her little son, who is rapidly developing a most ungovernable temper. One morning, irritated because his sister is far more interested in her doll than in the motor-car which stands throbbing outside the house, he attempts to make her look at it, and in the struggle brings her head with a crash against the window, shattering the glass, and severely scratching her face.

The boy is sent to his room by his mother, and on his father's return, shortly after, he gets very properly punished.

By evening the punishment has had its desired effect. He comes to his parents in tears, confessing his wrong. Seeing that he is thoroughly repentant, they forgive the angry act. But do they forgive the evil temper from which it sprang? By no means. That would be, more or less, to condone it. No; they strongly condemn it. They lovingly, yet firmly, show him its nature and its consequences, and they seek to lead him to abhor and condemn it as thoroughly as they do.

"God . . . condemned sin in the flesh." He did not condone nor forgive it; and the work of the Holy Spirit in us leads us to condemn it, even as God has condemned it, to the end that we may know deliverance from its power.

How do you reconcile the condemnation of sin in the flesh with the fact that believers may and do sin?

No reconciliation is needed. Condemnation is not eradication. The same Bible that speaks of the condemnation of sin (Rom. 8:3) also speaks of the fact of sin being still in us (1 Jn. 1:8), and supposes that the believer may sin, in pointing out the divine provision for such a case (1 Jn. 2:1). It even plainly tells us that as a matter of fact we all do sin (Jam. 3:2).

It is God's way to leave the flesh and sin still in the believer, that, practically learning their true nature, he may experimentally come into line with God's condemnation of them at

the Cross, and find his life and deliverance in Another, so that he can say, in answer to the cry, "Who shall deliver me?" "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24, 25).

Is sin never taken completely out of a believer? It says in 1 Jn. 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."

At death, when a believer is "absent from the body and present with the Lord," he is done with sin for ever. At the Lord's coming all believers will get their glorified bodies without one trace of sin being there. Until then we have the presence of sin in us though it is our privilege to be delivered from its power.

The verse quoted does not in the least conflict with the other Scriptures we have considered. It simply states for us the nature of the one born of God. He does not practice sin. ("Practice" rather than "commit" is the real force of the word here). It is not his nature so to do. In so saying the apostle viewed believers in their nature as born of God, without reference to any qualifying feature, which may assert itself in the wear and tear of life.

For instance, a man might walk along the sea-front of some fishing-village with a friend, and, pointing to a large net with innumerable cork-floats attached, say, "What a great boon to the fisherman is a substance like cork, which cannot sink." "Indeed," says his friend, "it can, for only an hour ago I watched the men recovering that very net from the bottom of the sea; the weights attached to the under side were too heavy, and, overcoming the buoyancy of the cork, dragged the whole lot down."

Who was right? Both were, allowing for their respective points of view. The former was thinking of the abstract qualities of cork, the latter of a curious and abnormal thing that happened in practice.

The apostle John writes from the abstract point of view, and sin in a Christian is certainly not a normal, but a most abnormal thing!

Christians, however, do sin all too frequently. Do such sins do away with the settlement reached both as to sin and sins, with which the Christian starts?

No. The cross of Christ is the ground of all. There sin was condemned. There atonement

was made, so that forgiveness reaches us when we believe. All, too, is the gift of divine grace, and "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29), i.e., they are not subject to a change of mind on God's part. They are for ever.

Sins after conversion do, however, greatly upset the Christian's happiness, and dispel the joy both of forgiveness and relationship with God, until in self-judgment such sins are confessed, and through the advocacy of Christ we get the Father's forgiveness (see 1 Jn. 1:9: 2: 1). Painful lessons in this way we all have to learn, but there is profit in them. We discover thus the true nature of the flesh within us, and that the only way to keep from gratifying its desire is to "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16).

Did the Lord Jesus Christ in dying bear the sins of everybody? Would not that follow from the fact that He takes away the sin of the world, according to John 1:29?

Scripture puts things thus: "He died for all" (2 Cor. 5:15). "Who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2).

These verses indicate what we may call the Godward aspect of His work. It includes ALL within the wide sweep of its benevolent intention; and propitiation has been made on behalf, not only of believers, but everybody; the whole world.

When we come, not to the intention or bearing of His work, but its actual results, we find things put differently. When we view things on the largest possible scale, and "think imperially," in the best sense of the word, Joh. 1:29 does indeed apply, but that is quite in keeping with the fact that sin and all that are eternally identified with it find their part in the lake of fire.

If we think of things in detail, we cannot say He bore the sins of everybody, for Scripture says: "Who His own self bare our [i.e., believers'] sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:27). Hence it is that again we read: "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:28). Thanks be to God that we find ourselves amongst them!