



Front Cover

THE HIGH COST OF SIN

Nearly every gospel preacher has a sermon on the high cost of low living! It is my firm conviction that the most difficult problem in reaching the lost is to convince them of the ravaging nature of sin. Truly "... the wages of sin is death ..." (Romans 6:23). The momentary, fleeting pleasure of sin (Hebrews 11:25) is all the bait the devil needs with some people. Thousands sink into the quagmire of evil without realizing how deadly Satan's slimy pit can be.

In Isaiah, we learn that iniquities separate men from God and produce a chaotic, misspent life that affords no peace to the ungodly (Isaiah 57:21; 59:2). Micah 7:3 tells us that shameful men "... successfully do evil with both hands—" while Hosea proclaimed "... they sin more and more ..." (13:2). Sinful folks rise early to corrupt their own lives (Zephaniah 3:7) and thus become as chaff which God blows away! The vain nothingness of corruption and licentiousness is best described in Jeremiah 3:25:

"We lie down in our shame, And our reproach covers us.
For we have sinned against the Lord our God. We and our
fathers. For our youth even to this day. And have not
obeyed the voice of the Lord our God."

Is it any wonder then that Paul wrote of men who were without God and without hope in this world (Ephesians 2:12)? In Hebrews 3:13, we read of the deceitfulness of sin, and in II Corinthians 2:11, we learn of Satan's devices. Only a steadfast loyalty to Christ can withstand his wiles (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Sin is like a chameleon. That lizard-like mocker can change its colors to meet the surroundings. Such subtlety has overwhelmed many casual souls. Sin is dangerous because the devil is shrewd and man is gullible. Too many folks had rather believe a lie and be condemned than to joyously embrace the truth and be saved (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).

As Isaiah graphically depicted rebellious children sinning more and more (Isaiah 30:1), we know that our day views the same scene as "evil men wax worse and worse." It takes such little effort to be a sinner while righteousness requires the very best

production of our lives. The path of least resistance makes crooked rivers and ungodly people. Could the inspired message of Romans 3 ever have been more applicable than now?

"... There is none righteous, no, not one" (v. 10).
"There is no fear of God before their eyes" (v. 18).
"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"
(v.23).

Sin hides the truth and makes promises that are never kept. In II Peter 2:19, we read these tragic words concerning servants of Satan: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption. ..."

The most dreadful aspect of sin's high cost is that ultimately it causes one to harden his heart and to die outside of Christ. Can words ever be more solemn and final and shattering than John 8:21? "... you will seek Me and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come."

Truly, "... There is sin leading to death" (I John 5:16). Sin is deceitful because its only goal is hell! There is no future in a sinner's life. When Satan ensnares a person there is only a bleak, dark chasm awaiting. This bold, bluffing item called sin is a dead end street and a hollow, empty, senseless shell. But it has enough power to keep us out of heaven!

THE PLEASURES OF SIN

One of the most expressive verses in the Bible is Romans 6:21 which reads: "What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." This thought emphasizes the utter futility of the wages of sin. To be sure, even the Bible mentions the momentary thrill of sin. There is pleasure in sin (Hebrews 11:25), but only "for a season."

The devil causes sin to have a certain allure, but those who nibble at the bait find only fleeting glimpses of true living—even in the present time! Friend of mine, the pleasures of sin are deceptive, temporary, high prices, and eternally a poor bargain. Some have realized too late

the high cost of low living! The pleasures of sin are just not worth it. Belshazzar's revelry was

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abruptly ended with a stern decree from God Almighty, "... You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;" (Daniel 5:27).

The wages of sin are very high. The pleasure of sin is later changed into remorse, corruption, and heartache. On the other hand, the incomparable joy in serving Christ gains new beauty with every passing day. It pays to serve Jesus. Now—and in the life to come. Do not be detoured from this glorious path by the pleasures of sin!

STRIVING AGAINST SIN

Perhaps the best four-step decline in spirituality is set forth in Jeremiah 7:24: "Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward."

When men quit fighting against sin, they have surrendered to the Captain of Hell. Far too many have waved the white flag before they even buckled on the sword. Why do we give up so easily?

One major reason that sin gains ascendancy is the startling fact that there is pleasure in sin. For a carnally-minded individual, it is far more appealing to associate with evil companions than with the saints in light. The bitter dregs of shame compel more than the pure waters of life. The devil will always see to it that leaving error is most inconvenient. As Byron stated in *Don Juan*, "Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure."

There are scores of folks who get their only pleasure in doing evil and this fully satisfies their worldly view of life. The tragedy is that they will continue without aim or purpose unless Christians begin anew to strive against sin!

Another contributing factor to the sinful predicament that millions are captivated by is the cunning progressiveness of sin. David, Demas, and Diotrephes did not begin in the clutches of Satanic influences—but

before they realized it adultery, spiritual infidelity, and arrogance had enraptured them!

What a contrasting view springs from the lives of Joseph, Joshua, and Jesus. These three fled from sin, purged it from the

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camp, and gained the victory over it. Our Lord finally sounded the death knell over the prostrate form of sin in His triumphant death.

If Ephesians 5:11 and I Thessalonians 5:22 were obeyed, there could be no major problem in our lives. These verses tell us to have no fellowship with evil, abstain from it, and rebuke it. Indeed, "... Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Timothy 2:19). The sin of compromise has led to complete departure from the Lord for convenience is the mother of apostasy. Unless we resist the devil, he will not flee from us.

Is it not a challenging, heartwarming promise that God provides a way to escape for us when temptation strikes? In I Corinthians 10, Paul, by inspiration, tells us of the decline and fall of some of Jehovah's people. But neither they nor we need to go astray. The rich provisions of grace and glory envelop our lives when the Prince of heaven enters our being.

We can gain a victory over sin for "... He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (I John 4:4).

"Into My Heart, Into My Heart,
Come Into My Heart, Lord Jesus.
Come In Today; Come In To Stay,
Come Into My Heart, Lord Jesus."

The pleasures of sin are too high priced for wise me to pay. The joys of Christianity are too glorious to miss. The poorest man is the one bereft of Christ. Therefore, let us war valiantly for truth so that sin-cursed humanity can know the peace that Jesus brings. M.B. Welch, in the famous poem about an old violin, said:

"And many a man with life out of tune and battered and
scarred with sin

Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd much like
the old violin.
A mess of pottage, a glass of win,
A game and he travels on
He is going once, he is going twice
He is going—and almost gone!

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But the Master comes and the foolish crowd
Can never quite understand
The worth of a soul and change that's wrought,
In the touch of the Master's hand."

May we so live that countless souls may live to see the hand of the Lord in our lives. If we do, the glories of eternal sunlight shall be our portion the land of fadeless day. This is, indeed, our task.

ORIGINAL SIN

There have been those who teach that we are born in sin and thus cannot help the propensity toward evil doing. We shall carefully examine this erroneous matter in just a moment, but first let us document such false doctrine as to its source.

John Wesley, founder of Methodism, went on record in *Original Sin*, p. 340, as teaching: "We are condemned before we have done good or evil; under the curse ere we know what it is." In Wesley's *Sermons*, Vol. II, p. 266, we quote: "In Adam all died. The natural consequence of this is that every one descended from him comes into this world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin, entirely void of the image of God, and of all righteousness and holiness wherein Adam was created. Every man now bears the image of the devil in sensual appetites and desires."

In the book, *What Lutherans Believe* by W.E. Schramm, on p. 65, we read: "Ever since the fall of Adam all men who are naturally begotten are conceived and born in sin." This naturally comports with the Augsburg Confession of Faith, Article Two, "All men are born with sin." This vice of origin brings eternal death on those not born again through baptism and the Holy Ghost."

Dr. W.A. Jarrell, noted Baptist, in *Gospel in Water*, stated: "That man is totally depraved is evident from his being a child of the Devil, fathered by the Devil and of the same mortal nature."

The Catholic position is made quite clear by B.L. Conway in *Question Box*, p. 253; "Baptism is a sacrament which cleanses from original sin."

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All of these quotations crumble in the light of Ecclesiastes 7:29 and 12:7. God made man upright and God gave the spirit of man. How could a perfect Creator be the author of sin?

The word sin comes from the Greek word "hamartia," which means "to miss the mark." The Bible variously defines sin as:

- A. A failure to do things that are right (James 4:17).
- B. A transgression of God's law (I John 3:4).
- C. All unrighteousness (I John 5:17).
- D. A violation of one's personal relationship with God (Romans 14:23)

From this scriptural definition of sin, we realize that the doctrine that teaches "infants are born in sin" is totally false.

"ADAMIC SIN" NOT TAUGHT IN BIBLE

At least six out of ten religions teach that a baby is born in sin. This doctrine is known variously as original sin, total depravity, or the Adamic sin. The Bible does not teach such a doctrine, but millions blindly believe it. This is why an unscriptural practice—infant baptism—exists. Men started with a false assumption and added a practice unknown to the Holy Word. If we can prove that infants are born pure, sinless, and safe before God, then the rite of sprinkling babies will certainly be proved false. The two ideas go together. If a baby is ushered into life in sin, then something must be done to remit that sin or the infant is lost. John Calvin said, "There are some infants in hell not a span long." Why did he think so? Because he taught that babies enter this world as sinners and, if they die prior to being sprinkled, they will be lost!

Here are some scriptures that forever prove we are not ushered into life as sinners:

- A. "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created. Till iniquity was found in you" (Ezekiel 28:15).
- B. "... The son shall not bear the guilt of the father ..."

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- C. We are "the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29) and He is "the Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9). How then could we be born in sin?
- D. "... Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Little children, evidently, are not sinners or Jesus would not tell us to be like them.

A passage in Psalms 51:5 is often used as proof for infants being born in sin. David said: "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me." But friends, the sin mentioned here took place before David existed.

INFANT BAPTISM NOT TAUGHT IN BIBLE

The Bible teaches that the mode of baptism was immersion (Acts 8:38; Colossians 2:12). We also see that there is not a single example in the New Testament mentioning an infant being "baptized." In addition to these truths, there are three prerequisites to baptism that an infant cannot do. He cannot believe in Christ, repent of sins, or confess Christ (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:37). These points prove that infant sprinkling could not be the one baptism mentioned in Ephesians 4:5!

Is it not strange that the Bible does not mention, nor command, nor illustrate a practice so widely believed in religion? If God had intended such a doctrine to be taught, He would have made some provision for it. The silence of the scriptures on this point speaks loudly. Infants are not born in sin or they would be subjects of New Testament baptism.

We safely conclude that the Bible does not teach original sin or infant baptism. These are doctrine of men and not mandates from heaven.

SIN IS PERSONALLY COMMITTED

The first sin recorded is that of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Read Genesis 3. Paul tells us in Romans 5:12, that sin thus entered the world and death by sin. The doctrine of original

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sin affirms that infants enter the world with the stain of Adam's sin upon them. But a careful analysis of the sin of Adam and Even disproves such a notion. How did they sin? Of their own choice and volition. And so it has been since. Even Judas Iscariot "by transgression fell" (Acts 1:24-25).

In James 1:13-15, we learn how personal the sinner's relationship is with his own sin. First, there is temptation; then lust and enticement is allowed to grow. This is shamefully followed by sin and death or by separation from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). The very fact that the judgment day will be based upon the deeds each person has done in his own body (II Corinthians 5:10; Romans 2:6; Romans 14:12), disproves the theory that we inherit someone else's sin.

WARNING AND A HOPE FOR VICTORY

Each one of us fights a gigantic battle in keeping sin out of our daily conduct. Alexander Pope, a great poet, said:

"We don't go down with a quick, hard fall,
We just glide along;
Little by little we lighten our load
Till we cannot tell right from wrong.
Sin is a monster of such frightful countenance
That to be hated needs but to be seen
But seen too often, familiar with its face
We first endure, then pity and then embrace!"

May God help us to take the avenue of escape when sin beckons (I Corinthians 10:13) that we might gain the victory through Christ over sin and death (I Corinthians 15:57; Romans 6:23).

SOME THINGS A SINNER OUGHT TO KNOW

Jehovah has fashioned nearly every one of His plans for the sinner's benefit. In II Peter 3:9, we read these beautiful and touching words:

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

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Thus, there are some things a sinner ought to know concerning God's way for mankind. The purpose of Christianity is to convert the erring to Jesus and thereafter to keep such ones ever pointed in the direction of heaven. This involves the responsibilities of people once they are servants of Christ. It is evident that we, as Christians, are failing to properly instruct many, prior to baptism, as to their duties once they are added to church. If the language of Acts 2:41–42 were applied to all new followers of the Lord, we would see a more wholesome view of New Testament Christianity in our midst.

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

A sinner must recognize these things as incumbent upon him should he obey the gospel of the Son of God. Otherwise, such a one will be a failure as he begins the life of a Christian. Unless there is conviction there can be no conversion. This principle is embedded in II Corinthians 5:17:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Now that we have set the general pattern of commitment to the teachings of Christ Jesus, let us be specific in mentioning two things sinners ought to know.

THE LOVE OF GOD

The tremendous drawing power of the incomparable love of our heavenly Father ought to be well known to every sinful person. For "God so loved" that he gave! He "demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). So, Paul exclaimed, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (II Corinthians 9:15). Regardless of the depths of shame a man has plunged to, he can be forgiven if he will genuinely obey the commandments of Christ. Even though Saul of Tarsus was a murderer, it was possible for him to later be the finest servant Jesus had upon the earth. From

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"chief of sinners" (I Timothy 1:15), Paul became the exemplar of righteousness (I Corinthians 11:1). We ought to tell sinners how much the Lord loves them. They must be aware of all that heaven has done to ransom them from iniquity. In I Timothy 2:6, we learn of Jesus "who give Himself as ransom for all. ..." Such wonderful truths cause us to shout aloud the tender words of Psalms 8:3: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him. ..."

Truly, it is marvelous to contemplate the gracious love of the Almighty. A poet by the name of Faber once wrote:

"How Thou canst think so well of us,
And be the God Thou art,
Is darkness to my intellect,
But sunshine to my heart."

A preacher read those lines and then added:

"And Thou dost think so well of us
Because of what Thou art,
Thy love illuminates my intellect
And fills, with joy, my heart."

If the the grace of the Lord will not melt the sinner's heart, nothing will! In I John 4, we read that God is the epitome of love and the way we learn to love is by realizing "He first loved us." Loving God naturally leads one to obey Him. Notice the emphasis of I John 2:4 and 5:3:

"He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandment. And His commandments are not burdensome."

Those who spend a lifetime serving Satan will have the dubious distinction of being with their Master forever (Matthew 25:41). When Jesus comes in judgment, they shall be raised "unto condemnation" (John 5:29). For them, "the lake of fire" will be the end of the line (Revelation 20:15). What a price to pay for

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such a deplorable destination! A sinner has no peace in life and only chaos in eternity. His ears will echo the words of Jesus found in John 8:21: "... you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." Sinner friend, awaken before it is everlastingly too late. The high cost of sin results in spiritual bankruptcy. Begin today to lay up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19–21; I Timothy 6:17).

THE REMEDY FOR SIN

The great disease of the soul must be cured. It is a cancerous condition that spreads like fire. Only the Great Physician (Mark 2:17) can successfully deal with sin. In Matthew 26:28, we learn that the blood of Christ was shed "for the remission of sins." Jesus, as the "the lamb of God," came to take away our iniquity. The Redeemer was the one offering for sin that makes it possible for lost humanity to be saved (Hebrews 9:26). Notice the powerful thought contained in Romans 3:24: "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

What does the Bible teach men to do in regard to salvation? One radio preacher has said, "You can do nothing! God must do it all!" His sermon topic was, "The Process of Salvation." His conclusion, though commonly accepted, is as foreign to the New Testament as polygamy. Since man was endowed by the Creator, with the ability to choose the path he would tread, there is something for us to do if God's remedy for sin would be a reality in our lives. In Joshua 24:15, men were told to "... choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. ..."

In Romans 11:22, we learn the results of making the proper decision, and in Matthew 23:37, the tragedy of the wrong choice is set forth. Therefore, a sinner must be cognizant of his own responsibility in coming to the Savior. As Tennyson stated:

“Our wills are ours, we know not how,
Our wills are ours to make them Thine.”

The devil has convinced most of us that an admission of guilt on our part is unthinkable. Truly, the most difficult words to utter are these, “I am a sinner.” The need for humility in the attitude of one who is lost is of maximum importance!

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WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

This is undoubtedly the most important question that ever fell from mortal lips. It is asked essentially three times in the book of Acts—the book of conversions in the New Testament. The very words are found in Acts 16:30 when the heathen jailer asked Paul and Silas “... Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The question implies that something must be done by each accountable being in order to be saved. This makes man active, not passive, in the plan of redemption. It makes salvation a personal, individual matter. There has never been a rational being that could spend a lifetime on earth without sometime, somewhere being vitally concerned over his own salvation. There have been some who waited too long to “... obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (II Timothy 2:10). Through no fault of the Savior, these condemned men spurned the invitation of the Lord (Matthew 11:28; Revelation 3:19; 22:17).

Jesus made it plain in His last instructions to the apostles concerning the requirements for salvation that would begin to be preached in Jerusalem (Acts 1:8) and would last until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). The Lord enjoined upon every accountable being from Pentecost til judgment, faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of past sins (Mark 16:16; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 8:6; 22:16).

These things are required to obtain the removal of the guilt in our past lives. Thereafter, to remain in saved condition, we must live

righteously, worship consistently and scripturally, and work ardently in the Master's service (Philippians 2:15; Acts 2:42; John 4:24; I Corinthians 15:58, Matthew 24:13).

To those who manifested faith in asking the apostles how to remove the guilt of their former manner of conduct, Peter answered: "... Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

To Saul of Tarsus, who had faith in Christ by asking Him what he should do to be acceptable unto the Lord (Acts 9:1–6) and who repented in fasting and prayer for three days, these words yet needed to be spoken: "And now why are you waiting? Arise

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and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

To a heathen in a pagan land— where the gospel had never been preached before—Paul said: "... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). They spoke unto him the word of the Lord so that he might believe (Romans 10:13–17). He repented of his sins, indicated by the washing of the stripes on the backs of Paul and Silas, and was immersed the same hour of the night (Acts 16:33). Are you a child of God? Have you done these things?

Sin is high priced because it makes a fool out of us by captivating us. It is much like the famous story of Jesus in Luke 11:33–36 concerning the evil spirit that was cleansed from a man. You can recall, thought, that seven more evil spirits—more deadly than the first—later inhabited the empty house that was swept and made ready for the occupants. The apparent lesson is simply this: evil must be replaced with righteousness.

In Galatians 5, it is noteworthy that the fruit of the Spirit is listed immediately after the works of the flesh are condemned. When sin dominates our thinking, we are dead while we live (I Timothy 5:6) because we are "...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God ..." (II Timothy 3:4). Thousands today are spiritually related to Felix of Acts

24:25. They tremble when challenged by the gospel concerning "...righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come ...", but they continue to abide in sensual pleasures! Fleshly lusts do war against the soul (I Peter 2:11) and cause us to longingly return to sin (Luke 17:32).

Fools still "mock at sin ..." (Proverbs 14:9) even though "... the way of the unfaithful is hard" (Proverbs 13:15). Truly Habakkuk was correct when he stated: "You give shameful counsel to your house ... And sin against the soul (Habakkuk 2:10).

Our sins are not hid from God (Psalms 69:5), and they surely "find us out" (Numbers 32:23). The "deceiver of the whole world," even Satan, does not want us to be pure for even a day. He realizes, as our spiritual adversary, that a person who falls into the pit of iniquity is not apt to soar as high again. The great poem by Hezekiah Butterworth concerning the bird with the broken wing has a brilliant middle stanza:

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"I found a young life broken
By sin's seductive art;
And, touched with a Christlike pity
I took him to my heart.
He lived with a noble purpose,
And struggled not in vain;
But the life that sin had stricken
Never soared as high again.

In Romans 7, Paul freely admits the personal struggle with sin. He had informed us in chapter six of that epistle that we are dead to sin have crucified the flesh with its lusts. Therefore, sin shall not reign in our mortal bodies; it shall not have dominion over us; we are not its servant because we do not yield ourselves to the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).

Now, in Romans 7, we learn of the civil war that rages within us. Flesh and spirit struggle mightily for the ascendancy. There is only one avenue of victory for the saint in the battle with "the law of sin and death." This victory is "through Jesus Christ our Lord and the spirit of life in Him."

One of the supreme tragedies of sin is the scar it leaves behind in our lives. Someone has aptly stated, "You can bury the past but you can't keep the ghosts from walking."

How desperately we need to purpose in our hearts not to defile ourselves (Daniel 1:8) as we "... cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit ..." (II Corinthians 7:1), because it is forever true that we reap what we show (Galatians 6:7-8).

The precious promise of the New Covenant is the abolishment of sin when we comply with God's terms. It is through Christ alone that sins can be remitted (Acts 13:37-39). Beginning at Jerusalem repentance and remission of sins were proclaimed (Luke 24:47). God has promised to be merciful to your unrighteousness and your sins and iniquities will He remember no more (Hebrews 8:12). The powerful language of Acts 3:19 becomes a balm to our souls:

"Repent therefore and be converted, that you sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

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Because a fountain for cleansing and for sin was opened through the shedding of the blood of Jesus (Zechariah 13:1; John 19:34), sinners like us can be snatched as a brand out of the burning fire (Jude 23). Thank God for such infinite love.

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