

Mansfield Conference - July 1970 - Bill Counts

PLAN "A" VS. PLAN "B" (LAW VS. GRACE)

The truth of God is many sided. There are two sides to a coin, but the truth of God cannot be contradictory. As I look through the Bible I find places which might imply that we are saved by earning it; if just taken at face value. Other places say clearly we are saved by faith alone. I don't think God has two ways of salvation. There are ways of harmonizing those passages; ~~the truth~~. This is not something we do with just the Bible or Christianity, and nobody else does; it is something that people in all fields of endeavor do; something that science does. For instance, a flying airplane does not contradict the law of gravity; there is no violation of the law of gravity; there are other laws that play a part in this matter that cause the plane to fly. It may look like a contradiction, but it is in harmony with it. The truth of the Scriptures harmonizes; it does not contradict. We may not have enough knowledge to harmonize completely every area; sometimes our minds are too finite to do so; because God sees these on his infinite plane with his infinite mind and we have only partial knowledge. There is a righteous God who condemns sin; this is an important part of His character. If we did not have the Bible to tell us this, we ought to suspect it; we ourselves condemn sin; unbelievers condemn sin. God's only response to sin can be to condemn it. The ~~revelation~~ revelation of his condemnation of sin follows a twofold path all the way through Scripture -- Plan A and Plan B. Plan A is the Law and Plan B is Grace.



we are going to follow the trail of the Law. Our righteous God righteously condemns sinners, under the law. We must realize that when we speak of "the law" we do not only speak of the law of Moses; but the law has been revealed in different ways at different times. There are three particular revelations of the law, and God can use any of these as a basis for condemning sinners, and there is no man in the world who is not hit by one of these three revelations of the law. Plan A included revelation, response, and results. Revelation of the law comes to some people only in the form of the law of conscience. Paul says that what is right and what is wrong is known by all; by those who have never heard of God, Christianity, Judaism; all know the ordinance of God. Even the most corrupt civilization has certain moral standards that reflect the righteousness of God, and people know what is good and what is bad. God has put this into the conscience of every human being. The atheist has a value system which he applies to the world; revolutionists have an absolute right and wrong, and they judge all others by it. But every man in the world falls short of his own value system; he condemns himself by his own system which he cannot live up to. There is no one who has ~~never~~ never had a witness from God. All who have sinned without the law will perish without the law; all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law; and those who have never heard of the law will perish by the law of conscience. God did not leave the world with just the revelation of conscience. The second revelation was the law of Moses, which He gave to the nation of Israel.



He spelled out in the detail of 613 commandments what was holy and what was not. There is the third law, the law in the New Testament; the Sermon on the Mount is law; many of the teachings of Jesus are law where he sets forth the righteous requirements of God. On the basis of the law of conscience, the law of Moses, or the law of the New Testament, people come in contact with this and they respond. They respond with fear of God and this is when the crucial moment comes. A man can go one of two ways: He can accept God's way, the way of Grace, realize he is helpless and lost, and he takes a trip over to Plan B. This is the legitimate use of the law. The law is designed to bring a man to the place where he will head into Plan B. But many people do not respond by going into Plan B; they are afraid, and they reject God's way and go their own way; ~~there~~ There are three particular manifestations of their own way: the revelation, the response, the ~~unhappy~~ results. When man reaches the place of fear (I am going to hell, I am lost, I've had it), he can't live there; there is too much tension. You have to flee to grace, or figure out a way to live with the fear. The way is to shield the law; the brightness that shines through is painted out so that it is acceptable. One way to shield the law is just open, moral rebellion; there is no God, or if there is one, no one can know him; ~~at the same time~~ there is no judgment, no hell, nothing. He forgets the whole thing of God calling man to account and runs away from it all. This is one reason why so many intellectuals so mishandle the Bible. You could bring to a professor a new fact of history and he would look at it with objectivity and *because* if true, it would have no particular effect upon him.

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But if the Bible is true, he has to get off his ego trip, he has to humble himself, he has to lose his intellectual pride, he has to receive Christ into his life, he has to have a whole different way of life. He knows that; and what is the way out. — Make sure that the Bible is not true. It is impossible for people to be objective with Christianity and the Scriptures. So some people head into rebellion. Others head into human righteousness; they are good moral people. They never face the law of God; they shield it out; they concentrate on the fact that they are better than most of the people around them. Instead of looking up to God, they look around horizontally, and on this level, they get comfort. This is their shield. Others shield it off through religion as the scribes and the ~~xxx~~ Pharisees. The concentration of all of the religions of the world is this: It is not that God has saved me by his grace; it is not that I am unable to save myself; but it is that through my ~~xxxx~~ various practices I can rescue myself from my predicament; this is the ultimate emphasis of all the religions of the world. (except for Biblical Christianity). That is the story of Plan A, and how man lives with God's righteous condemnation of sinners, and the tragedy is that as long as he stays that way, it is a bum trip, because he ends up in hell. The other way is Plan B.





3 Plan B is just as righteous and just as good as Plan A; Plan B is not a concession; a lowering of righteousness. It starts out with the righteous condemnation, not of the sinner, but of the Saviour. It starts out with God righteously condemning Jesus Christ on the cross. Remember, God cannot perform an unrighteous act. The reason it was righteous, was not because Christ had sinned, but because Christ received upon himself our sins, and God judged our sins in him. Just as Plan A has been revealed in various ways, so has Plan B. Here are three ways: family sacrifices, Mosaic sacrifices, and ~~the~~ Christ's sacrifice. In the Old Testament, we find that Job, Abraham and Abel offered sacrifice; ~~now~~ the sacrifice did not forgive the sin. Christ's sacrifice is the basis of forgiveness; not that of an animal. But the sacrifice looked forward to Christ's sacrifice, and it was the revelation to the man at that time. Before the Mosaic law, the sacrifice was done by the individual himself, and only the blood of it was offered by the priest. Something was to be learned about the substitute of an innocent ~~victim~~ victim for your sins. The Mosaic law brought in a more sophisticated system of sacrifice; and these looked forward to the final great sacrifice of Christ. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is God's revelation of of grace and the way of forgiveness to man. The ~~response~~ response of a believer to these sacrifices is two things:



1st response  
 1. He trusts in God and in the efficacy of the sacrifice and as a result he is born again and he has salvation; <sup>2</sup> then love comes and you cannot have faith without love and love without faith.

Faith brings us to salvation; it rescues us from sin; it causes us to be forgiven; <sup>In Christ</sup> and it makes God loveable because he is no longer our judge. Through faith, we trust in the Holy Spirit, and then as a result there is love for the Father, and for the rest of the members of the Body of Christ, and for the human race; love begins to operate in our lives. And if you have love without faith, that is a self-righteous love, that is just produced by a man under Plan A as a way of shielding off the righteousness of God from him. And if you have faith without love, that is a worthless thing, a dead orthodoxy. Faith and love together result in Christian righteousness. There are four kinds of righteousness: 1. absolute righteousness (that is perfect; and the righteousness of Christ; and what everyone needs to come to God); 2. Christian righteousness (what we as believers can have in our lives, but it is not perfect righteousness; there is no perfect Christian; it is where the Holy Spirit is working through us and there is a real righteousness, but it is not perfect; it is external and forced); 3. Human righteousness; and 4. religious righteousness. Absolute righteousness ~~gains~~ gains salvation. Christian righteousness gains reward. Human and religious righteousness gain hell. See how God works; both Plan A and Plan B are all through the ~~Scripture~~ Scripture.



Think of the 23rd Psalm; a psalm of the shepherd care of God, the psalm of a man living in Plan B. You need to build the foundation of Plan B before you start to build the structure of the obedient Christian life on top of it. When you try to build the structure of the Christian life on Plan A, and you take the exhortations of the New Testament and the righteous standards of Christ, you are heading for a miserable trip.

